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Building Efficacy In Early-Career Teachers: An Applied Research Study On The Role Of Professional Development On Teacher Efficacy

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BUILDING EFFICACY IN EARLY-CAREER TEACHERS: AN APPLIED RESEARCH

STUDY ON THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON TEACHER EFFICACY

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education
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by

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ABSTRACT

Teacher efficacy is closely connected to student achievement and teacher retention. The applied research explored how rethinking certain aspects of professional development would impact the efficacy of the teachers in an upper elementary building. The research program included two distinct components. School administrators redesigned after school professional development sessions in order to allow teachers to facilitate their own learning and lead sessions on areas of interest. The second component was a structural model that allowed early-career educators to visit other classrooms. Both of the components showed some promise for increasing teachers' sense of efficacy, but the response from the after-school sessions was the most positive. The time together after school did the most for increasing the overall health of the school culture, a necessary component for improved efficacy and organizational change.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to every educator who has committed to being a transformative figure in

someone's life, especially my wife Amber, who continues to educate me about faith, love, and

happiness 18 years after we began teaching together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

As a young teacher, I had a deep desire to learn and improve because I knew I had not gone through the "traditional" model of education. I went through the Mississippi Teacher Corps (MTC), an "alternate" route certification program that placed new teachers in critical shortage areas. Early on I felt like this limited me and at times impacted my own self-efficacy because I didn't necessarily have the knowledge all of the traditional route teachers had when they first entered the classroom. This feeling led to a real desire to grow as a professional and to grow quickly, to build my foundation as an educator.

Years later, this desire to understand others' professional capacity prompted me to study teacher efficacy in a school setting. Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (p. 3). For this applied research, self-efficacy refers to an individual's personal sense of efficacy. Bandura (1997) defines collective efficacy as "a group's shared belief in its conjoint capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment" (p. 477). Collective teacher efficacy has the most potential to impact student achievement (Hattie, 2010; Eells, 2011).

In schools, enhanced professional development is the best way to improve teacher capacity. Increased teacher capacity leads to increased self-efficacy and as individual self-efficacy rises, so does collective efficacy. The residual impacts of improved self-efficacy can address other concerns in education as well such as teacher retention, which has become a point

of concern in the state of Mississippi (MS News Now, 2018). The applied research for this study will use a program evaluation design to explore how reimagining site-based professional development can improve individual self-efficacy in early-career educators.

With the clarity like it happened last week, I remember being in class, teaching 10th grade English at Hope Springs High School. It was my first year, and in walked the principal, assistant principal, superintendent, and assistant superintendent. Each had a clipboard and stood around the perimeter of the wall because there were no open desks. My students kept cutting their eyes at each other with a quizzical look of what was going on in my classroom. For me there was a level of nervous excitement because I had four administrators watching me at the same time, and this would be a prime opportunity to receive some valuable feedback to help build my capacity and confidence. They stayed for 10, maybe 15 minutes, and then shuffled out of the room. After a day or so of waiting for some feedback, I followed up with the assistant principal, asking for feedback on what they saw in order to help me grow. Her response was "It was great. Good job." Never has a compliment felt so mundane.

As my obligatory two years passed, I developed a close relationship with the teacher across the hallway and peppered him daily with questions. Even though he taught Biology and I taught English, for me there was immense value in being able to have collegial conversations in the hallway, at lunch, and after school about not just pedagogy, but every aspect of teaching. Sharing a house with other first-year teachers also created a built-in environment where we were able to share ideas, talk about practices in the classroom, and reflect on how we were going to move forward as educators.

Throughout the two-year MTC program, we met regularly with our cohort, a group of 20 teachers, and often bemoaned how we felt like we were on our own when it came to growing as

teachers and professionals. At the time these conversations didn't seem like much more than young, frustrated teachers venting about their situations in difficult school environments. However, looking back, the concerns then about how we were going to improve and grow were very legitimate and transcended the field of education. Our shared frustrations, lack of confidence, and lack of self-efficacy eventually drove some of our cohort members out of the profession.

The purpose of the MTC is to address the teacher shortage, and the state of Mississippi has a shortage that has become debilitating to many districts. According to a Mississippi News Now (2018) report during the summer of 2018, there were over 2,100 teacher openings in the state of Mississippi. The issue has created such concern that in August 2018, the Mississippi Department of Education presented a proposal to the state board of education about how Mississippi could address the teacher shortage (Mississippi Department of Education, 2018).

Part of the approach to address this teacher shortage issue must be to build efficacy of all teachers, in all districts, and provide opportunities for them to build their capacity, so they remain committed and confident in their work. Creating enhanced levels of efficacy early in teachers' careers will pay dividends down the road through enhanced engagement (Kirkpatrick & Johnson, 2014). While the challenges in each school and district are different, stagnation in professional growth will hinder any possible solutions. Teachers must play an active role in their own growth and must be self-reflective to ensure their focus toward the growth of their self-efficacy and capacity remain a prominent part of their professional lives.

In education, the issue of quality professional growth and how to best equip teachers for the classrooms is paramount. Teachers must continue to believe they are the change agents in the classroom and administrators must cultivate this belief. Due to competing forces of high

stakes assessments, daily time constraints, and the uniqueness of each individual classroom and content area, this can be a challenge. Practices like giving effective feedback, which are meant to assist in capacity building, are not naturally a part of every school culture. For administrators, there is the risk of teachers nodding politely and never implementing the suggested feedback or teachers becoming irritable and completely dismissive of feedback. Instead of building up teachers, it demoralizes them.

Serving as a building-level administrator in the Phillips School District reinforces the need for me to understand how to help teachers build capacity and improve their own sense of efficacy so they do not leave the teaching profession early in their careers. My experiences in two different schools has left little doubt that growing teachers and providing them with fruitful opportunities for growth is a difficult task. It is hard for school administrators to cultivate quality professional growth opportunities that lead to an increased level of collective-efficacy in a school. Various coaches and resources are available, but they are not always part of a comprehensive, systematic plan for professional development. As a result of a somewhat disjointed approach to teacher growth, the district often leaves meaningful professional growth up to the individual teacher, which can be detrimental. This void in professional growth can hinder many teachers, especially if doubts arise in their own abilities and their sense of self efficacy as a teacher dwindles. Equipping our teachers with the needed skills through quality professional growth opportunities and developing their collective sense of efficacy are of the utmost importance for schools.

Description

The Phillips School District is located in Phillips, Mississippi, the county seat in Garner County. According to the United States Census Bureau's 2016 estimates, the city of Phillips's

population is 23,290, an increase of 23% over the last six years. Garner County is the third fastest growing county in the state (Schnugg, 2018), and the Garner County Chamber of Commerce indicates 29.1% of the population is school aged, 19 years and younger. This rapid growth has caused the school district to build facilities quicker than planned and increase the number of teaching units as well.

Congested roads in certain parts of the town, especially the more densely populated areas such as the town square, beg all sorts of questions. How much more can it grow? Is this the right kind of growth? On any given day tourists stop and marvel, taking pictures because the town square is picturesque and beautiful. The growth will continue for the foreseeable future. There is no doubt. The question is which direction will this bristling community go while it continues to makes the transition from quaint, small southern town to a mid-sized regional mecca of arts, culture, education, and sports.

Within Garner County, and a contributor to the rapid growth, resides Stone University, an institution of over 24,000 across all of its state branches, and within the Phillips community, it employees over 1,000 professors. Two federal courthouses and a regional medical center also bring in parents with high expectations for the children's education. Both the Phillips School District and the Garner County School District benefit from having children whose parents are so accomplished. These active academia families are strong supporters of the district, trusting the school will provide the teaching and opportunities their children will need. These families and their expectations bring a high level of accountability to the schools, which can produce healthy conversations that enhance the daily operations. It is common for parents to raise questions about instructional practices in the classroom.

This well-educated community of adults expects the district to challenge their children and prepare them for post-secondary education. Multiple groups on various social media platforms discuss and advocate policies and ideas about how to improve the school district. All of these elements create an environment of high expectations, although sometimes the expectations can be more about students' grades than the actual instruction within the classroom.

The community is supportive and proud of its school district and the success it has enjoyed over the many years. It has a strong reputation across the state, and there are strong pockets of support across all socio-economic levels in all corners of the district, from the arts, to athletics, to academics. These competing interests do sometimes clash within the school, especially when perceptions about the district's areas of focus and concentration play out through personnel and infrastructure decisions. Since Phillips is a small community, there is a heightened awareness of these decisions.

Much of the economic growth in Phillips is tourist related, and during the 2017 fiscal year, the city collected over four million dollars in tourism taxes alone (Schnugg, 2017). According to the most recent City of Phillips long-term comprehensive plan, jobs with annual salaries under $15,000 will see the largest growth, and "more than 40% of household growth over the near term will be in low-income households" (City of Oxford, 2016). Subsidized housing encompasses pockets within the community, only blocks away from million-dollar homes. Even in the county dilapidated trailers abut large estates, separated only by a grove of old trees. The drastic socio-economic differences and economic dichotomy in Phillips create different experiences across many aspects of life in the community, including the school system. As research has indicated (Alordiah, Akpadaka, & Oviogbodu, 2015; Abdu-Raheem, 2015; Belfi, Haelermans, & De Fraine, 2016), there is a strong correlation between socio-economic

status and academic achievement. This correlation is not unique to a particular race, gender, or ethnicity. Studies across the globe have all reaffirmed the same finding that socio-economic status has an impact on academic achievement. Considering the make-up of the Phillips School District, where over 40% of the students are economically disadvantaged, it is imperative teachers equip themselves with the tools they need to become master teachers. They must be aware of the heterogeneous make-up of their classes and know how to best reach all of their students. They must believe they can reach all of their students.

The school district comprises almost 4,300 students from PK-12 and is spread out over six different schools. All Phillips students enter Bacchus Elementary in kindergarten, but there is a strong pre-k program, jointly funded through local and federal funds. Students must apply for admission and meet certain criteria, so not all four-year olds are able to enroll. Stone University also has a pre-k program, but there are not enough spots for all students to enroll in those two high-quality programs.

Oby Elementary houses first and second graders for the district, but the community recently passed a bond issue, and the district will use some of the bond issue funds to build a new elementary school to replace Oby Elementary. For third and fourth grade, students attend Delta Dickey Elementary and then travel to Phillips Intermediate School for fifth and sixth grade. Students attend Phillips Middle School for seventh and eighth grade and then move to Phillips High School to prepare for graduation.

Walking through the halls of Phillips Intermediate School, one senses commitment by the teachers. Even on a late Friday afternoon, diverse classrooms of students remain engaged with content, albeit some of the engagement is outside for a hands-on science lesson and some of it is inside on a laptop. Makeshift classrooms in the hallways for overcrowded SPED teachers have

students working through assignments. The feeling within the hallways at Phillips Intermediate is that every minute counts.

When strangers to the building walk into classrooms to observe, teachers do not skip a beat. Instead, they welcome the visitors and tell them to grab a seat if they would like to stay and watch for a while. There is no race to create a false sense of teaching and learning when a visitor walks in because it is naturally occurring. Instruction is the norm, not the exception, and teachers take pride in how they move through the classroom assisting students.

Since over 40% of the Phillips School District's student population is on free or reduced lunch, classrooms in the district, especially elementary classrooms, have a very diverse set of student needs. While most teachers are committed to their craft, they openly articulate their frustration with not feeling equipped to meet all of the needs in a classroom where the standard deviation for student achievement levels is so great, and the challenges so unique.

Digging into student assessments reveals glaring gaps, largely along the socio-economic and race lines within the district. The state of Mississippi measures the achievement gap by looking at the percentage of students who are proficient or advanced on their end of the year assessments. The difference in total percentage who are considered proficient or advanced of each sub group is the measurable gap.

During the 2016-2017 school year, based on the English Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) results, the gap between Caucasian and African-American students was the largest in the state. The gap between Caucasian and Hispanic students was the largest in the state, and the gap between Caucasian and economically disadvantaged students was the second largest in the state. Results from the 2017-2018 MAAP assessment continued to show a significant gap. The English Language Arts assessment indicated the district had the

second largest gap in the state, and the results from the math assessment indicated the district had the fourth largest gap in the state. In the state 32% of all economically disadvantaged students scored proficient on the ELA assessment, and the district was only slightly better. Only 35.6% of all economically disadvantaged students in the district scored proficient or better.

During the 2016-2017 school year, all juniors took the ACT as part of the state's accountability model. The school's composite score for all juniors was 21.8, the second highest public high school score in the state behind a specialized math and science school. However, when looking at scores disaggregated by race within the district, a much different picture appears. The last three graduating classes, 2016, 2017, and 2018, all had to take the junior ACT administration. The difference on the composite ACT scores between African American and Caucasian students in those graduating classes was 7.5 points in 2016, 6.3 points in 2017, and 7 points in 2018.

The district has been adamant that improved teacher capacity will result in the reduction of the gap. According to internal surveys the district conducted during the 2016-2017 school year, 95% of teachers indicated a desire to learn about new ways to teach students. The results from the surveys contextualized our district compared to other participating districts nationwide. One significant difference was that only 69% of teachers nationwide indicated they had the needed resources, but in the Phillips district, 90% of teachers indicated they had the needed resources to be an effective teacher. Since the teachers desire to grow, and they feel they have the resources, the district must develop their efficacy. Improved efficacy with younger teachers will encourage them to stay in the field of education and address significant challenges like the achievement gap.

As one of the administrators at Phillips Intermediate School during the 2018-2019 school, I organized and oversaw the professional growth and development of our faculty. This was a large order, considering the other more traditional duties I had as an administrator at both the school and district level. During the 18-19 school year, Phillips Intermediate was consciously making the shift from after school, whole group, informational faculty meetings to after school professional development sessions that would equip our staff with new skills and knowledge. During the time after school teachers facilitated their own sessions and shared their best practices with colleagues. I also coordinated with specialized coaches in the district to come in and lead sessions in their areas of expertise like technology, literacy, and math. All of this work equipped our teachers to assist not only our students but students in any district where they may work in the future.

Justification of Problem

In Hattie's seminal work *Visible Learning* (2009), he argued the number one practice with the largest potential to impact student achievement is collective teacher self-efficacy, the belief in one's abilities and the potential outcomes they can produce (Bandura, 1994). Most commonly in education, the outcomes are enhanced student achievement. Bandura and Locke (2003) found that self-efficacy has a significant impact on an individual's motivation and performance. Having teachers believe and understand they have the most impact on student achievement and equipping them with necessary skills is critical. Hattie's position on collective self-efficacy, grounded in research such as Eells (2011), shows why schools must actively and intentionally think about how effective they are in growing their staff members. Based on Eells (2011) research, the effect size of collective teacher efficacy ($d=1.57$) is significant. Effect size is the magnitude of the impact, and any effect size over $d=.4$ indicates a moderate impact.

Closely connected to teacher efficacy though is teacher professional development, and Hattie's research (2009) indicates effective professional development has a large effect (d=.62) on teachers, but the transference of professional development skills to increasing student outcomes is sometimes more difficult. Taking a look at the interconnectivity of professional development and self-efficacy, it is clear why schools need systematic approaches that build efficacy in teachers and provide opportunities and experiences that allow them to grow.

Pedersen (2016) found that in higher education settings, how teachers and professionals view themselves as educators impacts how they approach professional development. He also noted the importance of being a part of a group while growing as a professional. Being a part of the Embedding Education for Sustainability Community of Practice (EfS CoP), the professional development model studied by Pedersen (2016), provided teachers with a higher level of job satisfaction. Of the participants in the study, one-third indicated they likely would not have continued in their current position without the supportive program. Pederson (2016) notes "research suggests that the collaborative learning approach of a CoP potentially offers a model for ongoing professional engagement that might keep individuals inspired and active in a role" (691).

Creating a supportive culture where teachers are allowed to continuously grow as professionals is vital. Practitioners do not view the traditional off site "sit and get" model as effective, and more schools are beginning to consider how they can grow their teachers at the site level. In areas where there are critical shortages of teachers, it is even more important for schools to provide systems and supports that promote teacher capacity and collective self-efficacy of a staff.

Vernon-Doston and Floyd (2012) also found that team membership, as well as teacher collegiality, played a large part in building leadership capacity. This led to increased feelings of self-efficacy. Schools must equip their teachers with the needed skills to feel comfortable in any classroom and be deliberate in how they work to improve efficacy within the building. The ever-growing shortage of teachers in the state necessitates schools prepare their teachers to be successful wherever they go, not just within their current district and context. As the number of teacher vacancies grows and grows, the impact from programs like the MTC and Teach for America (TFA) becomes smaller and smaller, so districts must consider how they are going to support their current teachers, so the problem does not become more exacerbated.

Audience

The applied research study is applicable to a variety of stakeholders, including teachers, students, building and district level administrators, and other districts that may be exploring ways to create cost-effective, impactful professional growth opportunities for its teachers. In addition to districts looking at ways to build teacher capacity, the proposed programs also have implications for educational entities beyond schools. Organizations like the MTC and TFA could potentially use components of the model to build capacity in alternate route teachers who sometimes may not have the systems of support others teachers have in their districts.

Teachers are the core participants in the process, and the focus is on building their capacity. They will be the ones who benefit the most because the knowledge they gain from the process should be beneficial in helping to refine their pedagogy. The idea is to take the collective discussions these teachers have with each other and create a system of shared thoughts and ideas. This collective system of support should in turn create a sense collective efficacy and enhanced capacity in each of the individual teachers.

Burdened with stringent, uniform requirements for how observations and feedback must take place, administrators can look at this model to find other ways for teachers to grow. Taking into consideration the ever-increasing amount of time administrators spend on other aspects of their jobs and the general opinions of many teachers regarding the current evaluative/feedback model, this approach could assist school administrators in one of the most critical aspects of their job, which is being an instructional leader. A key component of the system though is school-based administrators must be intentional about creating time for teachers to participate in the various components of the program. Furthermore, schools must understand this is a system to implement, and like any other system or program, it depends heavily upon the culture of the school. Without a fertile school and district culture, it can feel like one more chore to do for teachers. District-level personnel who oversee professional development could utilize the model as part of a larger, more comprehensive professional development plan.

Finally, organizations looking to attack issues in the profession such as teacher attrition and shortage would benefit from having a model that has been implemented and creates self-reflective learners. Looking at the myriad reasons fewer and fewer people enter or stay in the teaching profession, lack of support is a key element. If organizations such as Teach for America or the Mississippi Teacher Corps can train teachers on the front end about how to grow themselves in schools that may not have as supportive leadership systems, there is a better chance those teachers will continue in the profession.

Research Method

Knowing the potential impact of collective teacher efficacy in a school setting, the applied research looked at ways to create opportunities for early-career teachers in Phillips Intermediate School to build their efficacy as teachers and for all teachers to experience

enhanced professional development opportunities. As part of a larger professional development

program, the emphasis on peer visits, reflections, and collegial conversations will give a clear

model of reflective practice to assist them in their growth and development of their own efficacy.

To address the importance of collective efficacy within the building, administrators in

Phillips Intermediate School collaborated to create an action plan for teachers' professional

learning. This system included opportunities for data collection over the duration of the action

plan, which lasted 18 months. The action plan had two distinct parts of professional

development. After internally collaborating with each other about elements of the system,

administrators collected input from staff to help shape the details of the plan. These details

guided the decision making about best ways to provide opportunities for teachers to build their

own capacity.

Evaluation of the program occurred internally during implementation and at the

conclusion of the program, and school administration looked at feedback as part of the program

evaluation to determine how they could tweak or scale out the program. They made many

decisions about future models based on the responses from the teachers and staff. Since the

action plan was such a collaborative effort, it was imperative the administration heard from each

party involved about how it impacted them professionally.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this applied research was to explore ways to increase teacher efficacy in

all teachers, especially early-career educators. Early-career educators at Phillips Intermediate

School participated in professional development, peer visits, post conferences, and cross

curricular visits, and the summative goal for participants was to build their efficacy as teachers.

For the purpose of this study, an early-career educator was defined as having no more than four full years teaching experience, and each of the participants was a white female.

Part of the action plan included measuring all of Phillips Intermediate teachers' perceptions about their own levels of self-efficacy and attitudes about traditional models of professional growth opportunities such as conferences, professional learning communities, and administrative feedback. Ongoing formative feedback from all teachers during the process provided direction for future aspects of implementation. This research helped school practitioners determine whether creating a system for teachers to visit other teachers' classrooms and setting aside time for cross-curricular visits, self-reflection, and follow up conferences increased a teacher's perception of his or her own effectiveness. It also revealed obstacles to implementing such a program.

Participants in the study revealed what has impacted their self-efficacy at various points throughout the process. Conducting interviews with smaller focus groups during the year gave formative data about what aspects of the model worked well and what areas could continue to be refined to maximize effectiveness. Individual interviews occurred regularly and shaped aspects of the program. Analysis of visit log books revealed insight into what teachers saw when they had opportunities to visit other classrooms. The document analysis at the appeared during the coding process. The decoding of the log books at the end of the applied research were a critical piece of summative data for the applied research.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this study, the following is the central question. How can a school improve the self-efficacy of early-career teachers?

1. Did early-career educators feel their self-efficacy improved through focused professional development and activities?

    A. Did keeping logbooks create a focus of growth for early-career educators?

    B. Did visiting classrooms and conversations result in enhanced efficacy for early-career educators?

    C. Were enough experienced teachers willing to host visiting teachers for instructional observations?

    D. Did visiting teachers go to classrooms outside their own disciplines?

    E. Did host teachers feel comfortable enough to have teachers come in to just observe?

2. Based on the evaluations, how might the administration improve the program moving forward.

    A. Did professional development sessions provide meaningful opportunities for teachers to converse with each other?

    B. Were sessions offered on a regular basis with fidelity?

    C. How could professional development sessions be improved moving forward?

    D. Which sessions did teachers find most meaningful?

Conclusion

By the end of the study, my hope was to have a better understanding of what must be in place in order for teachers to build their capacity and increase their own sense of self-efficacy. Schools across the country will benefit from having a better understanding of the subtle nuances that impact teacher efficacy and how it directly connects to the overall culture of the school. While the work being done in the Phillips District centers around the impact on the achievement

gap, the context for other schools may be different. However, the process could be replicated and implemented in any school.

The subsequent chapters will explore the literature and look at the overall implementation of the program, including unforeseen challenges of implementing a program of this magnitude and takeaways a school would need moving forward. Some assumptions made by the researcher during the program were that teachers would be honest about the process and comfortable with all elements of the process since it occurred in their professional context. During the course of the writing, an intentional shift in voice indicates moments when the author was an active participant during the program's implementation.

CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Organizations across all sectors devote a significant amount of capital to the growth of their professionals and the field of education is no different. For educators though, one could argue the necessity of enhanced, comprehensive, quality professional development is greater due to the impact it has on a teacher's sense of self-efficacy, which significantly impacts student achievement (Hattie, 2009; Donohoo, 2018). How districts structure their schools so teachers can learn and grow is critically important. Voelkel and Chrispeels (2017) found higher functioning professional learning communities are predictors of higher collective self-efficacy. Studying an online professional development experience, Yoo (2016) found teachers' self-efficacy also increased by going through the web-based program. Karimi (2011) found a combination of online and in-person professional development models had a significant effect on the self-efficacy of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers.

Growing teachers in order to increase efficacy is important. However, knowing the best way to effectively grow and support teachers is difficult due to the uniqueness of each individual school or organization. The research provides a comprehensive look at various aspects of professional growth and is pertinent because the applied research at Phillip's Intermediate School will use different models of professional development to work to increase teachers' self-efficacy. The review provides information that will help shape elements of the action plan, specifically types of professional development used to increase overall self-efficacy, and it will contextualize

the reasons why the school decided to reassess some of their models of professional development in order to increase self-efficacy.

The chapter first looks at various methods of professional growth for teachers and what research has shown about different types of professional growth. Following the overview of professional growth, the research explores barriers in the school and what limits teachers' professional growth. The final part of the literature review looks at the role of feedback as a component of professional growth. This pertinent section highlights why feedback alone is often not effective in growing teachers and developing their sense of efficacy. A review of the literature reveals there is not one single best practice for enhancing professional growth. Instead, schools should focus on the culture and context in order to determine the best model of professional growth for their teachers and staff.

Methods of Growing

Evaluation Cycle

Multiple studies (Delvaux et al., 2013; Donaldson, 2013) indicate school personnel view teacher evaluations, the most recognized tool for growth, as serving dual purposes. The first perceived purpose is to offer feedback to help teachers grow professionally. The second perceived purpose is to identify ineffective teachers, often through a summative evaluation. After 30 interviews with principals across all grade levels, Donaldson (2013) found over 66% of the respondents indicated the evaluation process did not accomplish either of the two purposes. This is a staggering number of teachers who may possibly be stagnant in their own professional growth.

Compounding the issue of feedback is some teachers' perceived attitudes toward the evaluations and professional growth. Delvaux et al. (2013) found "teachers perceive little effect

of the evaluation system on their professional development" (p. 6) even though the study also found the teachers' perceptions of the feedback that occurs during the summative evaluation process is a crucial component of their professional growth. If the feedback is not perceived as useful or adequate, it significantly limits the potential for the teacher's professional capacity to grow. The research (Delvaux et al., 2013) points out teachers believe that the formal observation and feedback should be a critical part of their growth; however, this is in direct contrast with Donaldson's findings (2013), where many administrators do not believe the traditional feedback model accomplishes its purpose.

Brown and Crumpler (2013) synthesized multiple research papers and used the findings to propose a new model of evaluation for foreign language teachers, but the motivation behind the model could be applicable for any number of subjects. As a foreign language teacher, Brown expressed frustration in the evaluation model where he received little quality feedback. Observations centered around classroom management because the administrators who did the observations did not have backgrounds in languages. The authors presented a model for teacher evaluation and growth that included multiple evaluations, peer observations, and feedback. Additionally, they suggested the evaluations should function solely as an opportunity for professional growth and enhanced capacity. The authors also contextualized the purpose of peer observations and contrast them to peer reviews, a distinction Wood and Harding (2007) pointed out during their research on quality lecturing. Opportunities to visit and observe can be a key part of any quality professional development program.

These studies illustrate the complexity of effectively growing teachers. Administrators in some locations see the evaluative process as ineffective when trying to grow teachers and teachers often see the results of the process, the feedback, as useless. In districts where this

perpetual, inefficient, broken cycle is in place, schools are wasting of one of their most valuable resources, time, and this model has no significant impact on student learning. Research included in the literature review will develop my current understanding of self-efficacy and professional development of teachers, and it will help shape any program I decide to implement at the school site.

Technology

The advent of technology has provided alternate ways for teachers to grow beyond the traditional models, including evaluations, reading, and self-reflections. All can potentially provide useful information and feedback for teachers, but it is imperative school personnel understand how to effectively integrate various features into a comprehensive plan to help teachers grow in their professional capacity. However, understanding the culture and the context of the school's systems of professional development is critical, and simply moving to a technology-based model does not necessarily mean the best path for a school.

Bain and Swan (2011) argued school reform cannot occur until effective systems of feedback are established. Following up on the research of Berends et al. (2002), Bain and Swan (2011) suggested the "critical point of breakdown" (p. 674) is the inability to provide effective feedback to teachers and "[t]he problem in school reform is not that schools do not try to do anything; rather it is that they try to do too many things" (p. 683). Since there are significant issues with the current traditional evaluation cycle that should provide adequate feedback for teachers (Brown & Crumpler, 2013; Delvaux et al., 2013; Donaldson, 2013), schools must explore additional opportunities for professional growth. Once such way to improve professional growth and capacity is to use technology and teachers' colleagues as alternate catalysts to traditional models like administrator feedback and sit and get meetings.

Technology use for professional growth can potentially yield results when used to organize professional learning groups and assist in growing professionals. Yang and Liu (2004) studied the potential impact of technology on professional growth and learning. Their mixed-method study included 128 teachers who completed a series of online professional development activities. Based on the results from questionnaire interviews, the authors found there were positive effects on learning. Participants indicated they enjoyed the convenience and focus on individualized teacher's needs. Most importantly, the majority of the participants' perceptions indicated they saw the workshop as "positive, rewarding, constructive, empowering, exciting and challenging" (p. 752). Furthermore, most indicated the workshop, which included peer feedback through the online forums, helped grow their professional capacity. A few teachers noted that even though it was a virtual setting, they tended to have more discussions about math with their colleagues. The researchers did say, though, despite the strong overall feelings, they expected a larger amount of self-reflection and interaction from the participants. Two key elements of the model included the structured collaboration between colleagues and the individualization based on teachers' needs.

Kao and Tsai (2009) studied the attitudes of 420 elementary school teachers in Taiwan when using the internet for professional growth. The results of the study indicated that inherent beliefs and attitudes of teachers about web-based learning prior to the courses had a significant impact on their attitudes about the course. This study declared initial feelings about an approach or method will have a significant impact on outcomes, and exposure to methods in advance of utilization can impact the self-efficacy and attitudes of the participants in an initiative. The culture of professional growth in a school or district goes a long way in determining the success of any model or program.

While the results from the work of Yang and Liu (2004) and Kao and Tsai (2009) are promising when exploring using technology to help teachers grow, they also introduce more questions. As Hattie (2009) identified in his research, quality professional development has a strong effect of d=0.90 on teacher learning and growing educator capacity, but teachers must transfer their new knowledge. Further research on how many of the teachers then acted upon their new technology-based knowledge would be helpful. The Kao and Tsai (2009) study also highlighted the role pre-conceived attitudes and beliefs had on the potential impact of technology based professional growth.

Professional Development Models

Hattie (2009) identified the most and least effective forms of professional development. Included among the least effective forms were isolated discussions, lectures, and production of printed or instructional materials. That model of receiving materials, hearing a presenter speak, and then discussing the materials is, unfortunately, a very familiar scenario. Professional development is a systematic, ongoing approach. To reduce it to moments of isolation is to diminish its potential impact significantly.

Karimi's (2011) research included observations as part of a multi-pronged approach to increasing self-efficacy, and the research indicated observations were an important component of the model. The controlled research included three 16-course sessions for teachers. The study indicated the multi-pronged approach to professional development showed teachers' levels of efficacy increased. Included in the model were five different professional development practices: In-service Training, Fellow Observation/Assessment, Development/Improvement Process, Mentoring, and Study Groups

Contributing to the body of work about professional development, Timberly, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007) found through a meta-analysis of over 72 studies there were seven features of effective professional development. Hattie (2009) noted the authors found the most effective professional development "challenged the teachers' prevailing discourse and conceptions about learning" as well as challenged "teachers how to teach particular curricula more effectively" (p. 121). The juxtaposition of professional development, though, is despite knowing what the most effective professional development accomplishes, which is changing a mindset about best practices, the further along a teacher has progressed is in his or her career, the more difficult it becomes for that evolution to occur. Seemingly the more experienced and mature a teacher becomes, the more open the teacher should be to professional growth.

Delvaux, et al. (2013) found through their research there comes a point in a teacher's career where professional growth begins to diminish. The authors note "teachers with limited teaching experience (5 years of less), report considerably greater effects of the evaluation system on their professional development" (p. 8). This research highlights why it is so important for administrators to be able to offer quality feedback when they enter the classroom. Delvaux et al. (2013) offered up ideas about why this stagnation may occur:

> TALIS (OECD, 2009b) also found empirical evidence that less-experienced teachers are more engaged in professional development than more-experienced teachers. Teachers with limited experience also have more frequent performance or evaluation interviews and receive more guidance through such mechanisms as classroom visits and mentoring. As a consequence, they may experience greater effects from these interviews. An alternative explanation could be that more-experienced teachers have more job security or have obtained tenure. In the specific case of Flanders, teachers can reach an

appointment with more job security after a minimum of three school years. Because of

this increased job security, more-experienced teachers could feel less obliged to

undertake professional development activities. (p.8)

Principals' continued growth and willingness to grow is also a critical piece of

developing teachers' capacity to grow. Donaldson (2013) found through research that principals

who had undergone sustained professional development on how to improve teacher instruction

found fewer barriers when working to grow the capacity of their teachers. Furthermore,

Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) suggest the principal's role is to not only learn how to lead

professional development but to also create a culture within a school that promotes and cultivates

growth of individuals.

Barriers to growth

School culture

Despite having a picture of some of the elements needed in order to build capacity in

teachers, significant barriers still exist. These barriers hinder the growth potential for

professional educators. Brown and Crumpler (2013) note new teachers to schools will often

quickly assimilate into school cultures, and those cultures go a long way in shaping the further

growth of the teachers. If a school's culture is one where teachers have little sense of self-

efficacy, then that will quickly impact the growth of a teacher. However, if there is a culture of

continued learning, trust, and a high sense of self-efficacy, this fosters the needed support for a

teacher to continue to grow professionally. Donaldson (2013) noted almost one third of the

administrators who participated in the study indicated school culture limited the effectiveness of

the evaluations. Delvaux et al. (2013) point out "the attitude of the principal toward the

evaluation system" (p. 3) goes a long way in developing teachers' perceptions of the evaluative

process, which is in part meant to assist them in their growth. If the culture of the school is one where administrators do not view the evaluative process as helpful and fulfilling, teachers will not view it as helpful and fulfilling. Administrators should constantly evaluate and address the culture of a school to assist in the professional growth of its staff. For the purpose of this study, school culture is a "set of underlying beliefs, norms, and values held by members of the school" (Cosner and Peterson, 2003, p. 12) and includes rituals, ceremonies, symbols, and stories (Peterson, 2002, p. 10). Distilled further for this study, school culture includes how teachers are socialized into their educational roles and how that connects to their overall professional growth.

Delvaux et al. (2013) also found an administrator's credibility has a significant impact on the evaluative process and potential for growth. Factors contributing to teachers' perceptions of whether an administrator is credible or not include whether he or she has the competency to evaluate, considerable experience teaching, familiarity with subject matter, and enough opportunities to view the teacher. This issue of credibility manifests as a lack of trust between the administration and staff. Relationships must drive the trust needed in order to create a culture of professional growth.

Furthermore, principals indicated barriers to effectively growing teachers include a lack of time and a lack of willingness from teachers to want to grow. Donaldson (2013) noted in the research some of the principals in the study indicated there simply is not enough time to complete the required observations and provide in-depth feedback. The principals indicated a lack of opportunity to see representative teaching is another challenging barrier.

Significant evidence exists showing elementary schools have a stronger correlation to leadership and achievement than secondary schools (Louis, et al. 2010). There is an inherent cultural difference between elementary and secondary schools, so administrators should take this

into consideration when creating programs for professional development. Teachers in secondary settings are less likely to see administrators as instructional leaders than in elementary settings. Understanding if these dynamics exist in a particular district is extremely important. Ovando (2001) studied elementary teachers' perceptions about systematic professional development and the support they received for their own professional growth. The topics for professional development stemmed from their performance evaluations, and the study explored more learner-centered teacher evaluations and noted how having learner-centered evaluations contributed to more openness to the ideas of walk-throughs and feedback. Additionally, Louis et al. (2010) indicated smaller schools are more likely to view the administrator as the instructional leader, but "principal leadership diminishes as we move from smaller to larger buildings" (p. 100). Considering smaller schools likely have more intimate relationships between the administrator and the staff, this is not surprising.

The challenge is how to address unique feelings, perceptions, and culture around professional development. Each component varies greatly due to school culture, teacher experience, school size and the age of children in the school. Hattie (2009) concluded through his synthesis "higher effect sizes were found in studies where: training groups involved both high school and elementary school teachers rather than only high school or only elementary teachers" (p. 120). This is not typically the case though when providing professional development, and when schools do bring teachers of all grade levels together for PD, it most often reflects the model Hattie indicates has the least impact on student learning; talking, discussing, and listening to speakers, which occur in isolation as a one-time event.

Quality feedback

Knowledge and understanding of systems of professional development, limitations to potential growth, methods of growing, and knowing what has the most significant impact on a professional's growth are critically important. However, the single most critical element needed to complete the picture of professional growth is the inclusion of effective feedback and/or self-reflection, indicating whether a practice is or is not having an impact on student learning. The complexity of identifying effective feedback poses challenges for all school personnel. As Hattie (2009) indicates, formative evaluation of teachers, in any number of ways, has a very strong effect size of $d=.90$, and this feedback encompasses numerous data points. Teachers can receive feedback in a multitude of ways, but schools often only think of the process as a channel of communication flowing from administrator to teacher during the evaluation cycle. However, there are multiple ways to create opportunities for teachers to receive feedback.

Delvaux et al. (2013) indicated the reality is some teachers do not want to act on administrative feedback received during the evaluative process, and their research indicated some feedback from evaluations even had an adverse impact on professional growth. Tuytens and Devos (2011) indicated there is a significant amount of research showing feedback only leads to "improvement and development when teachers perceive the feedback as accurate and useful" (p. 894). They further argued the relationship between the teacher and the administrator is at the core of the perception.

Other pieces of research, including O'pry and Schumacher (2012), indicated the relationship between the principal and teacher was not always significant when looking at teachers' attitudes about the feedback process. Further research of the impact of the relationship between principal and teacher on the perception of feedback would be useful. Both studies

indicated, however, if teachers initially do not perceive the feedback as valuable, then there is little chance they will act upon it, even if the feedback is substantive in nature. This highlights the impact of the culture within the school.

Kimball (2002) conducted a qualitative study in three different school districts in Wisconsin, looking very closely at teachers' attitudes about various components of the teacher evaluation system. Eighteen different evaluators and 55 different teachers were interviewed for the study and one of the findings indicated feedback as it related to instruction was minimal and the majority of the feedback centered around classroom interactions and organization.

The article hits on many of the motifs found in other articles, including Brown and Crumpler (2013) and Lochmiller (2016). Principals often tended to give feedback about aspects of the classroom they are familiar with from their time teaching. This included areas such as classroom management, their own content background, and classroom organization. However, as Delvaux et al. (2013) state, school leaders should be able to provide quality, constructive feedback to all staff members. Lochmiller (2016) even suggests secondary administrators must be able to navigate the sub-cultures of those schools, the very specialized instruction in a content area, in order to effectively work as an instructional leader.

Peer feedback

A large body of research exists exploring the role of peer feedback as a mechanism for professional growth. As Wood and Harding (2007) note, there can be subtle but important distinctions in how peers and their observations are incorporated into the classroom. Some function to provide feedback and some function as evaluations.

Charteris and Smardon (2015) used a qualitative empirical study to examine teacher agency as a part of teacher professional growth. Thirteen teachers were broken into smaller

groups of 2-3, who then actively worked as peer coaches for the next two years. Ongoing video interviews with the teachers were thematically categorized. The authors explored dialogic feedback within professional learning groups and teachers' perceptions of the impact of having the ongoing conversations.   Teacher responses indicated teacher agency, the internal capacity to make needed change, could be significantly impacted by enhanced dialogic feedback.

Challenges do exist when attempting to include peer feedback into the professional growth model. Daniel, Auhl, and Hastings (2013) conducted a qualitative study on the challenges first year teachers experience when going through the self-reflective, peer evaluation program. A total of 65 first-year teachers went through a 12-week program which included practicing and modeling. Feedback from the program indicated mixed results, with some of the responses showing the challenges of giving feedback to other first-year peers, including feeling bad about critiquing. Most in the study indicated, though, they understood how important feedback and critiquing was in order to grow as a professional.

The peer feedback challenges mentioned are a direct reflection of a culture of a school. As Leithwood et al. (2010) noted, principals play a key part in creating a culture that allows teachers to grow more as professionals and become more engaged in their own growth. Brown and Crumpler (2013) argued peer feedback must be an acceptable part of a school culture in order for it to advance teacher growth. Perlman and McCann (1998) found some limitations of peer observations include the needed time, trust among the staff members, a need to be vulnerable and an honest exchange of strengths and weaknesses. Finally, they found too much feedback can be overwhelming and confusing. All of these potential issues should be addressed before embarking on a peer feedback model.

Implemented correctly, peer feedback has the potential to have a positive impact on teachers. It can also have a positive impact on principals' roles and duties. Kraft and Gilmour (2016) conducted a series of interviews with 24 different principals in an urban district. After the interviews, the authors studied and categorized the responses thematically. The qualitative study found that simply expanding the role of the principal as an evaluator led to a series of unintended consequences, including reduced time for feedback with teachers and a narrow focus on pedagogy outside the principal's core content area. One proposal to help mitigate the negative outcomes included developing peer observation and feedback models. This proposal could address some of the previously mentioned concerns raised by teachers, including lack of subject specific feedback and administrators concern about lack of time.

Delvaux et. al (2013) found through their quantitative analysis of over 65 schools that effective feedback for professional growth must be immediate, clear, frequent, specific, non-penalizing. Van der Lans, van de Grift, van Keen, and Fokkens-Bruinsma (2016) studied the minimum number of classroom visits that must occur in order to ensure a level of reliability about the quality of feedback being given. Of particular importance was ensuring a high level of reliability if administrators were using observations for evaluative purposes and making decisions about teachers' professional careers. The study indicated a minimum of 10 visits must occur before a valid summative assessment can occur. Furthermore, the results showed feedback should be spread out between three different observers at a minimum, which could lend support to an increased role of peer feedback.

Citing research by Brinko (1993) and Scheeler, Ruhl, and McAfee (2004), Bain and Swan (2011) found through the review of literature some of the same key characteristics of effective feedback. Common themes again included immediate, specific, and corrective

feedback. Additionally, similar to van der lans et al. (2016), their review indicated multiple sources should be providing the feedback. All of the aforementioned results are found in other studies included in this review of literature. One interesting finding not included anywhere else is Brinko (1993) found feedback is most effective when a subordinate or a peer of equal standing delivers the feedback. These results support the idea of peer feedback and give credence to the idea of incorporating student feedback into plans for professional growth. Further research on the impact of student feedback on professional growth of teachers would be beneficial.

Conclusion

There is no dispute professional growth is an integral part of the teaching profession and since the connection to self-efficacy is clear, it must be a point of emphasis. However, the model of an administrator simply giving feedback to teachers and then expecting professional growth from the feedback is not an effective model. Too many factors influence the process. Feedback and self-reflection can impact professional growth, but schools must be intentional about how they organize their systems of professional development. They must reflect on the role of technology in their schools. They must analyze their current culture and nature of relationships between the administration and staff. Knowing younger teachers are more likely to accept feedback, they must analyze how they provide feedback.

The path to teacher growth though is complex, and professional growth does not occur without a clear understanding of effective professional development. Multiple avenues, including technology, exist and have shown promise in assisting teachers to build their knowledge base, but there are still plenty of challenges. Embedded mindsets, teachers' years of experience, and school culture can all have an adverse impact on professional growth. Combined with the results about feedback and what constitutes quality feedback, further research

into models of effective professional development and feedback could provide opportunities to greatly improve the capacity of an organization. More research should also take place about the unique factors that impact and interfere with teachers' reception and implementation of feedback in order to improve their professional capacity. To truly maximize and develop effective systems of professional development, more research must be done on how teachers prefer to grow professionally at the local school levels.

CHAPTER 3 – DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this applied research was to build a system of professional development that increased the self-efficacy of teachers in the Phillips Intermediate School. Guided by the research questions below and the work of Eells (2011) and Hattie (2009) surrounding collective teacher efficacy, the program focused on early-career educators at Phillips Intermediate School, a fifth and sixth grade building in the Phillips School District. All teachers in the building participated in the enhanced professional development model, but early-career teachers had additional opportunities to self-reflect through peer visits.

The research will attempt to answer the following questions.

1. Did early-career educators feel their self-efficacy improved through focused professional development and activities?

A. Did keeping logbooks create a focus of growth for early-career educators?

B. Did visiting classrooms and conversations result in enhanced efficacy for early-career educators?

C. Were enough experienced teachers willing to host visiting teachers for instructional observations?

D. Did visiting teachers go to classrooms outside their own disciplines?

E. Did host teachers feel comfortable enough to have teachers come in to just observe?

2. Based on the evaluation, how might the professional development program for all teachers be improved moving forward?

      A. Did professional development sessions provide meaningful opportunities for teachers to converse with each other?

      B. Were sessions offered on a regular basis with fidelity?

      C. How could professional development sessions be improved moving forward?

      D. Which sessions did teachers find most meaningful?

Chapter 3 outlines the research process used to answer the above questions. The chapter begin with the development of the action plan, from its conception through the anticipated summative evaluation of the program. Included are critical elements of the action plan and the research methods used to conduct a thorough evaluation of the program.

Development of Action Plan

During the spring of 2018, the administrators at Phillips Intermediate began to discuss the upcoming year and self-reflect on the previous year. That year the school had implemented an initiative that organized best practices in a school setting. Birringer-Haig (2018) pointed out the connection between administrators and teacher self-efficacy, and the Phillips' administration committed to continuing to identify best practices centering around communication, teaching, and professional development. The initiative, known as AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), worked to focus administrators and teachers' attention on the aspects of a school that have the most impact on student achievement. The administration at Phillips Intermediate began to organize areas of improvement for each administrator as well as other members of the leadership team. Feedback from members of the leadership team guided some of the discussions as well, especially around the culture and climate of the school. The hope was that through

dedicated work to increasing teacher capacity the culture of the school would improve. The

administration made a point of emphasis to work toward improving the younger teachers sense

of efficacy and thought through ways in which they could build their toolkit, thus increasing their

own sense of confidence.

During the summer of 2018 the administration made the decision to redesign the

professional development program for Phillips Intermediate. Instead of using after-school

gatherings for informational faculty meetings, the model was one where the teachers and staff

would self-select sessions of interest and break out into smaller groups. If an after-school

session did involve the entire staff, the subject matter was pertinent to the growth of the staff in a

certain area or development of school culture, not just dissemination of administrative

information. Additionally, administration made the decision to have all of the teachers at

Phillips Intermediate be integral parts of the professional development, facilitating many of the

after-school sessions themselves. This model allowed the teachers to be the facilitators of their

own learning. In order to guide the planning, the administration asked the teachers about specific

areas of interest regarding professional development. Teachers received a Google form titled

Professional Development Priorities from the administration in June 2018 with the following

directions:

In an effort to tailor PD for teachers, please select from the following areas of interest to

you professionally.

1. Teaching the whole child (social/emotional learning, cultural competency, empathy for

student)

2. Project based learning

3. Writing across the curriculum

4. Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)

5. Developing Independent Readers

6. Utilizing centers

7. Remediation strategies for math

8. Remediation strategies for reading

9. Behavioral supports for autistic children and children with emotional distress

10. AVID WICOR strategies

11. Creating an innovative classroom

12. Utilizing technology to enhance instruction

The results of the survey gave a clear idea of areas of interest from the staff. Teachers desired assistance with how to better understand and work with children from a behavioral point of view. From the survey, 39 out of 58 responses, 67.2% of the teachers, indicated they wanted to hear more about how they could teach the whole child. The second highest choice was PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention System) with 53.4% of teachers, 31 out of 58 teachers, indicating an interest. The fifth highest choice was behavior supports for autistic children, and 23 out of 58 students, 39.7% of the faculty, indicated an interest in learning more about how to work with those students.

After receiving the survey results, the administration discussed how those three areas directly connected to behavior in the classroom, one of the most challenging parts of being a teacher, especially an early-career educator. Conversations with some of the early-career educators reinforced the feedback survey, indicating they were uncertain at times about how to address some of the most challenging students in their classes. As a result, their own sense of

efficacy had diminished at times. Using this information from the survey, the administration began to build out the additional pieces of the action plan.

Description of the Action Plan

The following sections lay out the pieces of the action plan. Each element of the action plan served a clear purpose in understanding the staff and the implementation of the program at Phillips Intermediate School during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school year. Some of the elements of the school wide action plan changed based on other district wide initiatives that may require implementation.

Opening Professional Development

In addition to implementing a plan of action within the school, the administration at Phillips worked to create an improved culture, which involved trust and risk taking. For a new action plan to be successful and for a new culture to take shape, there must be an element of trust between the teachers, especially when taking risks. It is unlikely teachers will buy into a process where they are asked to be vulnerable if they do not trust their colleagues. As such, the first two professional development sessions of the 2018-2019 year centered around the role of trust in a building and how trust impacted collective teacher efficacy. Believing that trust is built through how individuals respond to each other, the staff practiced active listening during their early sessions. The goal of the first two sessions was to lay a strong foundation of why the school was changing its approach to professional growth as it related to self-efficacy and connected the impact of culture and efficacy back to student achievement.

During the initial back to school professional development on August 18, I presented an overview of how the school would be approaching professional development for the upcoming year. There were four objectives for the initial meeting in August.

1. Develop an understanding of collective efficacy

2. Further develop an idea of teachers' interests for growth

3. Outline and describe professional development sessions

4. Explain the role of flex time for teachers.

I presented pertinent information surrounding each of the objectives, including the areas of most interest for professional development sessions and a working definition of collective efficacy for the staff. We used the definition from Donohoo, Hattie, and Eells (2018), noting collective efficacy is "when a team of individuals share the belief that through their unified efforts they can overcome challenges and produce intended results" and this leads to increase effectiveness. During this same presentation, teachers at Phillips had the opportunity to post to an online forum about the challenges the school faces each year. The posts were honest and transparent, and I anticipated this outcome. The posts highlighted some deep concerns about their own work and the perceptions of their work at the school, primarily as it related to the accountability model. Immediately following the activity, I played a short, humorous video to highlight the collective work the staff would have to put in during the year to address some of the challenges the teachers perceive in the school.

The first after school professional development session took place on August 29, and the goal of the meeting was to continue to cultivate an environment where teachers learned to listen and trust each other. In order for the model to work and teachers to build their capacity and efficacy, I explained teachers must be willing to share their expertise and passions with each other. Additionally, I wanted to establish and explain the new model of after school professional development sessions and remind them about why we were moving to the new model. I also reiterated the redesigned model was a part of my dissertation in practice.

During the August 29 meeting, I opened with *Good Things*, a common practice in the school, that highlighted the good events that have occurred. It was also a good barometer of the pulse of the staff. How eagerly they volunteered and who volunteered to share positive events that occurred in the school typically revealed a little bit about the climate of the school at that time. When I opened the session with *Good Things* at the meeting, I looked to find something that was quantitative and the staff could easily understand. I intentionally worked to find these metrics in subsequent after school sessions because they would more easily validate the process we were beginning to go through as a staff.

During the initial after school session, teachers participated in a listening activity that tested their ability to actively listen as well as creating some vulnerability, something that would lead to increased trust as well. The administration put teachers in groups of three for the activity and very strategically placed teachers with colleagues who they likely did not know very well. The initial activity and informal feedback from the teachers was very positive and provided a strong foundation for the first set of sessions offered at the after-school professional development.

Following the first two sessions, six different staff members agreed to participate in the first set of choice sessions later that semester, a good indicator of buy in at the time. Notably, the administration felt all staff members had more to offer each other during this transformative process and felt the more time they had to dialogue with each other in a semi-structured environment, the better the end result. Each of the initial sessions in August lasted one hour, so during the first month of school, the teachers had two hours of professional development in a semi-structured setting.

After School Professional Development Sessions

The second element of the action plan was to build after school professional development sessions that focus on teachers' areas of interest. The goal was to not only provide meaningful sessions for them but to also give teachers a voice in their own learning. Data from the teachers' summer interests survey guided the session topics. I asked some teachers with specific expertise to facilitate some sessions, and other teachers volunteered to lead some sessions. As mentioned earlier, teachers expressed an interest in working with autistic children, so the behavior specialist facilitated a session on working with autistic children. Included during the session was a general overview of what it meant to be autistic and some simple strategies to use when working with autistic children. The goal for all sessions was to provide teachers with actionable knowledge and strategies they could take with them to the classroom in order to build their efficacy in any given area. Creating these micro sessions gave teachers more opportunities to dialogue with each other around a focused topic of interest.

Evaluation of this component of the action plan consisted of individual interviews and focus groups. During the evaluation, I contrasted the choice sessions with other models of after school professional development, including traditional faculty meetings and other choice sessions. I also explored and evaluated the value in having choice sessions with a group of colleagues the teacher knew versus a semi-structured professional development session where the teachers did not know each other. It was important to understand the extent to which familiarity impacted implementation of new ideas in the classroom.

Efficacy and Professional Development Survey

Following the November 28 professional development session, all teachers completed a survey on their beliefs about current professional development and their own sense of self-

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efficacy when dealing with challenging students. The November session was a whole group

viewing of the movie *Resilience* (Redford, 2016), a documentary discussing the impacts of toxic

stress on students. The movie was part of a district-wide initiative to learn about the whole child,

but as mentioned earlier, based on their summer interest survey, Phillips Intermediate's teachers

indicated they had the greatest interest in teaching and reaching the whole child.

Analyzing the efficacy and professional development survey gave me good idea about

where the entire staff stood in regards to their own self-efficacy and the challenges we had as a

community of teachers. I modeled the professional development questions after the Marzano

Research Institute's *Examining Evaluator Feedback Guide* (Cherasaro, Brodersen, Yanoski,

Welp, & Reale, 2015), and the teacher self-efficacy questions come from the *Teachers' Sense of*

Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). See Appendices B and C for

resources used for the surveys.

Many of the questions on the self-efficacy survey surrounded students with challenging

behaviors, which tied back well to the areas of interest the teachers indicated on the summer

professional development survey. After the completion of the movie, I addressed the staff and

connected the movie back to the discussions about developing our own sense of self-efficacy.

The survey only took 10 minutes to complete. The goal of the survey was to immediately

receive feedback on how equipped teachers felt to handle the challenging dynamics of the

classroom and to see where they feel they needed more support. The second goal was to see how

current models of professional development have aided them thus far in their professional

growth.

Peer Visits/Conferences and Log Books

In the spring of 2019, participating early-career teachers began to visit classes to see more veteran teachers operate. The intent was to build trust and confidence through the focused sessions and then begin to move into the peer visit phase. The administration put as many parameters and structures in place in order to assist the new teachers and allowed them to leave their classrooms. These visits were cross-curricular, so the early-career teachers could see teachers in all content areas, not just their areas of focus. Nine teachers agreed to participate during the spring, and each had fewer than four years' experience in a traditional classroom. The goal was to have the teachers visit at least four different classrooms over the spring and fall semester.

Administration was available to cover classes, so the teachers did not have to give up their planning or PLC time in order to go into classes. Each visit should have lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, and the teachers recorded notes in their own personal log books for self-reflection. Going into the classroom, the teachers had a series of guiding questions to assist them as they watched other teachers operate within the classroom. These guided questions connected back to the self-efficacy survey the staff completed.

After visiting the classroom, the participating teacher set up a time to visit with the host teacher in order to probe further and ask clarifying questions. Again, this collegial dialogue was one of the most important parts of the entire process. Having the opportunity to ask how practices and strategies could be adapted to another content area or how a teacher reached a particularly challenging student was very valuable for a young teacher.

Program Evaluation Plan

As I evaluated the overall impact of the program, qualitative and quantitative data guided decisions about the fidelity of the implementation. In October 2018, I collected the first piece of formative assessment data. Teachers completed a 9-weeks survey covering a variety of areas in the school. Using a Likert scale with 5 choices, the staff indicated they agreed (4.0) that the school was offering meaningful opportunities for professional growth. This feedback indicated the sessions offered during the after school professional development were meaningful and teachers appeared to gain something from them. Verbal feedback from teachers after meetings was also positive, and many of the teachers indicated how much they enjoyed dialoguing with staff who they normally didn't have a chance to see. Over the course of the program, I took informal observational notes and included them as part of my overall evaluation of the program. As I heard from teachers or saw extended conversations occurring after school based on the afternoon sessions, I documented those observations and used them as part of the overall program evaluation.

At the end of the program, I collected the log books from the participating teachers and analyzed the thoughts and ideas of the teachers during the observational cycle. All participating early-career teachers received their log books in February 2019, and the first observations began in March. The purpose of giving them a notebook instead of using a computer was to remove some of the distractions for the observing teacher. I specifically told them not to bring their computers into the classroom. Teachers had a set of guided questions to ask themselves while they visited classes, and the guided questions connected back to the teacher efficacy surveys.

Evaluation of the use of these log books provided good information and detail about the level of implementation and the fidelity of the process. After one year of recording thoughts and

observations in the log books, I collected them from the teachers in order to code, specifically

looking for observations regarding the most challenging aspects of teaching based on the

efficacy surveys. Even though teachers entered the classrooms with the prescribed set of

questions to guide their thoughts, they were not limited in what they could record and watch.

The goal was to identify practices and strategies that could assist them and build their own

capacity. The data collected through the log books played a large part in determining whether

the school has implemented the program with fidelity.

As part of the formative evaluation of the program, I met with early-career educators for

interviews to see how they feel about the visits and conferences. The goal was to understand

how they felt about going into classrooms and whether they were able to collect information they

could then apply to their practice. I interviewed both the host teachers and the visiting teachers

in order to create a full picture of the process from both points of view. I needed to understand

from the host teacher how the school could improve the entire process. If anything needed to be

tweaked going into future rounds of observations, the interviews would reveal those changes.

Appendix A outlines the Teacher Interview Protocol I used for interviews and focus groups.

Another part of the formative evaluation were small focus groups with all participating

teachers at various points during the program. These groups offered a different setting to discuss

the program and the implementation, and it offered another opportunity to have collegial

dialogue in the school. I anticipated some of the organic conversation during these focus groups

to be very revealing. When I initially met with the early-career educators about the possibility of

being a part of the program, they were all very excited and wanted to participate. Included in

these conversations were questions about how we as a school can support early-educators as they

transition to the school.

Conclusion

The development of the action plan started with an idea of what we as a school wanted to accomplish. The arrival of a new whole-school initiative prompted us to start reflecting and asking questions about various aspects of our school operations and planning began in the spring of 2018 for how we wanted to address teacher capacity and self-efficacy. The self-reflection led to an acknowledgement on the part of the administrators that we could do better job equipping them with skills they would need in order to address new and existing challenges in the classroom. A 5th grade class that had recently entered the school provided challenges we had not anticipated and were not fully equipped for at that time, so that was also a catalyst for our conversations.

As with any school, merging the school initiatives with any new current initiatives from the top can sometimes be challenging if it just seems like more for the teachers. In the case of this applied research, we were able to build off the AVID initiative, which emphasized professional growth for teachers. Rethinking how we structured our professional growth opportunities to increase self-efficacy became clearer. Increasing opportunities for teachers to choose and lead sessions of their own interest or expertise was one critical piece. In addition to creating an environment more conducive to professional dialogue through the sessions, we wanted to encourage some risk taking for our teachers. Our thought was that nudging them out of their comfort zone and sharing out their passions would create a culture where all teachers' self-efficacy would increase. If teachers heard how other teachers addressed challenging issues, they would likely be more receptive to new strategies than just listening to administrators give a presentation.

As the action plan unfolded, new district initiatives and points of formative and summative evaluative data continued to shape the direction. The initial feedback from the summer 2018 sessions shaped much of the work thus far, but as we continued to explore topics and have experiences within the school, we had to remain nimble enough to respond to the needs of our teachers. At the beginning of the year, a new special education strategy put a number of our teachers in a new, intimidating situation. The feedback from these teachers indicated they lacked the skills, resources, and confidence needed to address these new challenges, and they felt as if they were not succeeding. Taking that information, I began to structure some after school sessions to address their feelings of inadequacy.

Through interviews, observations, and staff surveys, I checked for fidelity of implementation of each of the elements. Formative feedback served to shape future professional development implementation. I ended up collecting summative data through staff efficacy surveys, personal interviews, and through analysis of the logbooks. The evaluation of these final pieces of the action plan gave a good idea of how effective the program was in increasing efficacy of the staff members.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this applied research was to explore ways to increase teacher efficacy in all teachers, especially early-career educators. The applied research for this study used a program evaluation design to explore how reimagining site-based professional development could improve individual self-efficacy in early-career educators and the overall collective efficacy in a school. This research helped school practitioners determine whether restructuring professional development and creating a system for teachers to visit other teachers' classrooms and self-reflecting increased a teacher's perception of his or her own effectiveness.

Chapter four presents findings from the applied research study and includes quantitative and qualitative information, and the results address and answer the two central questions and sub research questions. Included in the program evaluation results is an overview of the data collected from teachers regarding personal beliefs about professional development and efficacy. This quantitative data on professional development and efficacy guided and shaped the development of the professional development model used in the action plan. Qualitative data collected through interviews, focus groups, and artifact reviews reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the model and helped make recommendations for improvement.

Teachers who currently work in the district and teachers who participated during the first year of the model but moved out of the school after the first year provided all of the necessary quantitative data. Some of those teachers work in other positions in the district, and some of them have moved out of the district completely. Data results came from a series of surveys

given during the development of the program. The results from these surveys gave formative feedback about the direction and implementation of the program.

A combination of sources provided qualitative data. Participants included early-career educators and veteran teachers. Collected data came from personal interviews as well as written responses to questions. Focus groups and individual interviews were the primary sources of data, but the log books also provided data about the model. The researcher recorded all interviews to ensure the integrity of the data collected during the process and to give a complete picture about teachers' feelings regarding the redesigned model of professional development.

Chapter four begins with a review of some of the principle pieces of literature that guided the research and the associated research questions. Following the short review, the author describes the two central parts of the applied research and explains the components of each part. After describing the central parts of the after school professional development sessions and the peer visits/log books, the researcher moves into the data section. The data is organized by type, starting with individual interviews with four different teachers. The next pieces of data are the results of the two focus groups in the study, a group of inexperienced teachers and experienced teachers. The last piece of data is a coding of the log books teachers took into the classrooms. The chapter concludes by answering the two main research questions. Embedded in the answers to the research questions are the answers to the sub questions for each of the primary research questions.

Background and Research Questions

As discussed in Chapter one, the issue of quality professional growth and how to best equip teachers for the classrooms is paramount. Teachers must continue to believe they are the change agents in the classroom and administrators must cultivate this belief. Due to competing

forces of high stakes assessments, daily time constraints, and the uniqueness of each individual classroom and content area, this can be a challenge. Practices like giving effective feedback, which are meant to assist in capacity building, are not naturally a part of every school culture. For administrators, there is the risk of teachers nodding politely and never implementing the suggested feedback or teachers becoming irritable and completely dismissive of feedback. Instead of building up teachers, it demoralizes them.

Since this is often the case, enhanced professional development is the best way to improve teacher capacity. Increased teacher capacity leads to increased self-efficacy and as individual self-efficacy rises, so does collective efficacy. In Hattie's seminal work *Visible Learning* (2009), he argued the number one practice with the largest potential to impact student achievement is collective teacher self-efficacy, the belief in one's abilities and the potential outcomes they can produce (Bandura, 1994). Hattie's position on collective self-efficacy, grounded in research such as Eells (2011), shows why schools must actively and intentionally think about how effective they are in growing their staff members. Based on Eells (2011) research, the effect size of collective teacher efficacy ($d=1.57$) is significant. Effect size is the magnitude of the impact, and any effect size over $d=.4$ indicates a moderate impact.

Most commonly in education, the desired outcomes are enhanced student achievement. However, the residual impacts of improved teacher self-efficacy can address other concerns in education as well such as teacher retention, which has become a point of concern in the state of Mississippi (MS News Now, 2018). Schools must equip their teachers with the needed skills to feel comfortable in any classroom and be deliberate in how they work to improve collective efficacy within the building. The ever-growing shortage of teachers in the state necessitates schools prepare their teachers to be successful wherever they go, not just within their current

district and context. As the number of teacher vacancies grows and grows, the impact from programs like the MTC and Teach for America (TFA) becomes smaller and smaller, so districts must consider how they are going to support their current teachers, so the problem does not become more exacerbated.

Guided by the research questions below, the applied research model intended to answer the following central research question: How can a school improve the self-efficacy of its teachers?

1. Did early-career educators feel their self-efficacy improved through focused professional development and activities?

A. Did keeping logbooks create a focus of growth for early-career educators?

B. Did visiting classrooms and conversations result in enhanced efficacy for early-career educators?

C. Did follow up conversations after a visit provide meaningful information?

D. Which sessions did teachers find most meaningful?

E. Did visiting teachers go to classrooms outside their own disciplines?

2. Based on the evaluation, how might the program be improved moving forward.

A. Did professional development sessions provide meaningful opportunities for teachers to converse with each other?

B. Were sessions offered on a regular basis with fidelity?

C. How could professional development sessions be improved moving forward?

D. Were enough experienced teachers willing to host visiting teachers for instructional observations?

E. Did host teachers feel comfortable enough to have teachers come in to just

observe?

The remainder of this chapter explains the key parts of the action plan and presents

findings based on data sources. At the end of the chapter, the researcher answers the research

questions based on the collected data. Answering the research questions will provide needed

data to improve the overall program.

Components of Professional Development

After school professional development.

Focused after school development meetings began during the fall semester of 2018. From

September 12, 2018 to February 20, 2019, the school administration at Phillips Intermediate

School organized seven different after school professional development meetings. Five of the

seven meetings involved choice sessions for the teachers, and the other two sessions were whole

group sessions with an intentional focus on efficacy and community. There were two additional

after school meetings organized by the superintendent during January and February. Those

meetings centered around the hiring of a new administrator for the school, so the school could

not use those days for professional development activities.

Over the course of the seven organized after school meetings, there were a total of 21

different sessions offered by administrators, teachers, and central office staff in the building.

Sessions offered and their descriptions are listed below. Each presenter crafted his or her own

description for the session.

- Autism - Learn about strategies and accommodations when working in the classroom
  with students who are on the spectrum.

- Creating Centers - The Daily 5 consists of five literacy tasks that encompass six language arts: reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visually representing. They provide an authentic way for children to practice the behaviors and skills they need to become better readers and writers.

- PBIS - What PBIS looks like in the classroom. Looking at how to give points without it being overwhelming. When/why to give points and how it can have a positive outcome in your classroom.

- Writer's Workshop - Mentor Texts: Inspiring Original Student Work in a Copy-Paste World: If you are hoping to create assignments that your students genuinely connect to… or you would you rather retire than read another copy-&-pasted submission, then Mentor Texts may be worth your time! In this session, we'll explore ways to use authentic work samples in your field (from science/tech to SS & the arts) to instruct your students - and inspire original work with a real-world purpose.

- Parent Communication - Communication that Works! Does your stomach get tied up in knots when you know you need to call a parent about a child's negative behavior? Do you feel like it really doesn't matter if you call or not? If you would like for your communication to have a greater impact, come to our session on effective communication.

- Self-selected Online PD Modules

- SAMR (Level 1) - Substitution/Augmentation: I use technology to replace other products like pencil and paper and to review students (Quizlet, etc...)

- SAMR (Level 2) - Augmentation/Modification: I use technology to replace other products but with significant enhancements. I modify the design of the lesson or

expected outcomes because I have technology. I use the data created by the technology.

- SAMR (Level 3) - Modification/Redefinition: I use technology to create experiences not possible without it. I use the technology to connect with outside resources.

- Implementing AVID effectively in a science classroom

- Implementing AVID effectively in a math classroom

- Implementing AVID effectively in an English Language Arts classroom

- General AVID strategies for any classroom

- Basic strategies when working with ELL students

- Beginner Schoology

- Math strategies for a classroom with a broad range of ability levels

- Quick, easy strategies to integrate and evaluate writing in any subject

- Integrating the Arts - Learn how to seamlessly integrate the arts into various content areas, creating cross0curricular lessons that are engaging and relevant.

- Magnolia Database Research - Learn how to use the library's subscription-based research databases like Magnolia. Using vetted databases like Magnolia will ensure students use reputable resources when researching and writing.

- Big Time Brain Pop - Explore the different features of Brain Pop and how it can be used across all content areas.

- Feedback that Works - Explore how to create a simple, non-threatening, student survey to collect feedback on various aspect of the classroom. Customize to collect data on what you as the teacher want in to order to improve your practice.

By the end of the program there were 21 different individual sessions offered, and there were 25 different Phillips School District employees involved in the process. Two of the employees were school-based administrators. Five of the employees were central office staff members, and the other 18 employees were staff members in the school.

Midway through the fall semester, the administration gave the teachers at Phillips Intermediate School a survey to collect feedback on all aspects of the school. The administration asked the staff to rate their level of satisfaction on 15 different areas of the school. The areas included: overall work environment, professional growth opportunities, administrative communication, administrative enforcement of discipline, teacher workload, relationships with parents, relationships with students, protection of instructional time, PLC implementation, colleague support, administrative support, student achievement, school procedures, school climate, and school safety. At the time, the school had conducted three different after school professional development meetings. The results from the survey showed of the 15 areas the school measured, the professional growth opportunities had the fifth highest level of satisfaction.

Toward the end of the fall 2018 semester, all teachers completed a survey on their own sense of efficacy. The intent of the survey was to provide information on the overall efficacy of the staff and to create areas of focus for early-career educators as they began to move into the peer visit cycles within the school. A portion of the results from the survey are included in Table 1. Full results are included in Appendix D.

The results from the efficacy survey helped create the guiding questions for the peer visits. The statement with the lowest mean score centered around motivating students who were disengaged in class. The statement also had the highest variance of all answers from teachers. Other low scores involved classroom management and classroom disruptions. The staff

discussed the results of the survey during an after-school session, and they had the opportunity to evaluate the results amongst themselves and draw some of their own conclusions about the results.

Table 1

Results from staff efficacy survey

Statement	*M (SD)*	Variance
How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	3.83 (.88)	.78
How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	3.83 (.86)	.74
How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	3.59 (1.01)	1.02
How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	4.15 (.72)	.52
How much can you do to help your students value learning?	3.9 (.88)	.77
How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	4.1 (.79)	.62
How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	4.05 (.79)	.63
How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	3.71 (.89)	.8

Note. Teachers answered each question using a Likert scale response from 1-5, with 1 being "none at all" and 5 being "a great deal." *n*=41

Peer visits and log books.

During the spring of 2019, the school began the process of creating a system where early-career educators had the opportunity to visit other teachers' classrooms. Each early-career educator who desired to participate in the process received a log book to record notes while

visiting the classroom. The visit cycle began in March 2019 and lasted through January 2020.

Teachers received a list of questions to guide their visits, but the teachers were not required to

simply focus on the guiding questions. The researcher constructed the questions based on the

results of the efficacy survey given to the staff in November 2018. The guiding questions were:

1. How do the host teachers interact with students who may be disengaged or

unmotivated?

2. What do you notice about how the teacher relates to the students?

3. How does the teacher address minor disruptions?

4. What do you notice about the instruction and assessment?

5. How many different ways does the teacher assess for learning?

6. How does the teacher make the learning meaningful and relevant?

The first three questions all center around classroom management because that was one

of the lowest sections of the efficacy survey. During the interviews with select staff members,

classroom management was an area of focus. For those early-career educators who did end up

visiting a class, they mentioned how they were looking for classroom strategies when they sat in

a classroom. Each teacher brought a log book to the classroom to record their observations while

they were there. The notes from the visits are discussed later in the chapter.

Data Sources

Individual interviews

Individual interviews with three second-year teachers at the end of the 2018-2019 school

year revealed the importance of having a support system for their own personal growth and

reflection. Each of the three teachers had just completed their second year in the Phillips School

District. One of the three teachers had a previous year teaching experience in another school

district, but there had been a two-year gap between her last job and the job at Phillips Intermediate. An analysis of the notes from the interviews showed each of the three teachers mentioned how important it was for them during their time at Phillips Intermediate School to have a professional colleague actively engaged with them about their growth as a teacher. The level and model of engagement varied for each teacher, but the common theme was each teacher had the opportunity to self-reflect on their practice with another professional.

For Teacher A, an early-career teacher, she noted the importance of a veteran teacher who worked as a coach in the school district. The teacher talked about how valuable it was for her to have a veteran colleague as a coach who could offer constructive feedback about the content because she viewed her as knowledgeable about English Language Arts. She also felt comfortable inviting the coach into the classroom in order to view her teaching. She saw the coach as someone who she could trust as a mentor because she was not there in an evaluative capacity. She was there in a coaching capacity. The sessions and dialogue occurred in a structured, professional environment within the context of the school and covered both classroom management and pedagogy.

Reflecting on the year and her growth, Teacher A noted how important dialogue with other colleagues was for her during the year. She explained it did not matter whether it was structured, formal dialogue during after school professional development sessions or informal conversations during the class transition or lunch. These times provided her a great opportunity to self-reflect. However, she also noted during some of these conversations, there was a tendency for them to become a "mosh pit of negativity" and she had to remove herself from the situation.

Another of the early-career teachers, Teacher B, indicated the value of the informal reflection with a colleague who was a close social acquaintance. She identified the informal time talking about pedagogy and practice with her colleagues as having much more of an impact on her growth as a teacher compared to some other practices. Teacher B did not have a professional coach who worked with her department the way Teacher A had a coach during the 18-19 school year. She indicated having her colleagues support while finding her way was critically important, especially as she found what worked and what didn't work for her as a teacher. Reflecting on her year, she noted, "It makes me confident that it's okay to fail and adjust."

Furthermore, when asked about practices that enhanced her sense of efficacy and growth as a teacher, Teacher B responded in the negative, and first noted what did not assist in her sense of efficacy and professional growth. The first practice she identified was the formal observation she had during the year. She explained it did not help because she spent a significant amount of time preparing for the formal observation, and the administrator came in for only a few minutes and then left the classroom. Teacher's B feelings echo what Delvaux, et. al (2013) found during their research. Delvaux found teachers with fewer than five years of experience view evaluations as playing a significant part in their own professional growth and based on her response, Teacher B did not receive any assistance from her formal observation.

Teacher B also noted some of the best feedback she received that assisted in the development of her own sense of efficacy came from the students. She said when students responded to her in an affirmative way, it built up her sense of confidence. She extended the thought about students to also include parents. Teacher B indicated when parents would make informal or formal comments about her class it provided her good feedback. Those types of

comments also increased her sense of efficacy in her growth as a teacher because she felt as a whole, there "is not a ton that builds our confidence" as teachers.

Teacher C reiterated many of the same comments as Teachers A and B. She noted how important it was for her to have a team the first year to help her self-reflect and offer feedback. She also pointed to the value of feedback from parents and students and that when students failed her tests, it really impacted her sense of efficacy. She explained that her first year at the school was full of hesitancy, but during her second year she began to feel confident enough to try new activities in her classroom. The conversations she had with other teachers also encouraged her to stretch herself and try new activities in her class. This sense of confidence also allowed her to find her own style and drop some of the practices her experienced teachers used, including the use of a behavior chart in the classroom. However, she said the experienced teachers were very supportive of her as she grew into her identity as a teacher.

She also emphasized the importance of "finding the positive person" and to "find the people who will help you grow" as a teacher. Reflecting on some of her colleagues, she said she stopped going to some social events because it brought her down. She began to recognize in the building who she needed to approach when she was struggling. Knowing which teachers would help her reflect in a healthy way allowed her to switch from an angry mindset to a learning mindset where she was able to reflect on the situation and make the best of it.

Teacher F, a second-year teacher who was the district's first year teacher of the year for the 2018-2019 school year, said being asked to serve in a leadership role in the department built her sense of efficacy. As a result of the designation as the PLC chair, she went and visited more classrooms, which she acknowledged made her more comfortable trying new activities in class and "helped with my confidence" as the PLC chair. Even though she did receive the award from

the district, her first year she struggled with confidence and even asked at one point if she would have a job the following year due to her own lack of confidence. She said she looked to her administrators first for feedback because they were the designated instructional leaders, but she acknowledged she was not "going to ask for feedback from teachers who [she] may not agree with how they are teaching" in the classroom. She also said she was unable to pull pedagogy strategies from teachers in other disciplines, but seeing classroom management techniques helped immensely. Small practices like lamps instead of lights, soft music, and good smells made a world of difference, and they are all ideas she picked up in other classrooms.

Reflecting on her first year, she noted one area of growth was in understanding "that it's okay not to be the best at everything you are working toward. I've learned it's okay to go to other teachers' rooms and see" how they instruct a class. She continued, "Coming in to be a teacher I was scared to ask for help or to be seen as someone who may need help…I've learned a lot this year that it's okay to ask for help. That it doesn't show signs of weakness." She attributed that attitude of being open to learning to a previous job. She acknowledged when she came out of high school everything had been easy for her, but her first job in college challenged her. She realized she did not have all of the answers, and as a result she had to learn how to ask questions and take feedback on how to improve at her job.

She enjoyed the focused professional development time at the school during the 2018-2019 school year because she had a choice of what to attend and the sessions were very relevant. She pointed to the session on parent contact as one of the most beneficial because she was struggling in her confidence in how to have difficult conversations. She said it made a big difference in how she approached parent conferences in her classroom and the day of the interview she "called three parents comfortably and stood [her] ground." She also enjoyed the

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dialogue and fellowship that occurred in the after-school meetings with the entire staff, even if it was only briefly before they broke out into their separate sessions. She noted she missed doing some of the opening activities like *Good as Gold* and *Good Things*. She said "A lot of us don't realize that we want that back or that we need that back because we don't want to give up our mornings and our afternoons. But that first ten minutes of positivity was really something I looked forward to every time."

Focus Groups

Early-career educator focus group.

Two early-career educators took part in a focus group designed by the researcher to better understand the peer visit model and to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Both of the educators were female and were completing their first year of teaching in the school. Teacher D had previously taught for three years in another school district, and Teacher E was completing her first year of teaching, but she worked as a student teacher in the school district the previous year. Both teachers participated in at least one of the peer visits. Teacher E participated in multiple visits while she worked as a student teacher and multiple visits as a full-time teacher.

Several themes came out of the focus group. The teachers offered rich conversations about the role of school culture as it relates to professional development and gave insight into how classroom visits shaped their own classroom management. Both teachers acknowledged certain limitations to being able to fully take advantage of the opportunities to visit classrooms, but they both recognized the potential value in having increased opportunities to visit other teachers.

Both teachers indicated the most valuable part of their own professional growth thus far has been the opportunity to converse and reflect with their colleagues. Teacher D pointed out, "…PD's are good, and I take what I can from them and apply it when I can, but as far as the most beneficial, it's talking within" departmental or grade level groups. Teacher E added that her conversations with other staff members provide her feedback on a variety of professional practices, including lesson plans, seating arrangements, relationships with parents and students, and selfcare. She pointed out the value of the conversations with other teachers is that "within that moment, whatever you're struggling with, you get feedback immediately…". The teachers pointed to a semi-structured gathering of teachers from multiple districts as one of the best professional development experiences they have had as a teacher. Teacher E said it was good to be in a room with other teachers in other districts who were encountering the same issues and challenges and to know her challenges as a first-year teacher were not unique to just her and experienced teachers had many of the same challenges.

Both teachers did contrast the semi-structured professional development opportunity with other more organized professional development sessions and opportunities they have had this year and last year. During the 2019-2020 the school district implemented an idea to delay school every other Monday in order for teachers to attend professional development sessions of their choosing. There were face to face and online options, and the teachers spent roughly two hours engaging in the professional development. According to the teachers, the transference of the information has been difficult due to some of the unintended consequences that have come with the delayed starts. Both teachers noted any of the good feelings they may carry with them after a session are often diminished due to entering a school of unregulated children who have been "babysat" at the school for the first half of the morning. Further, both teachers noted the

logistics of traveling back and forth during the morning is frustrating. Having to go to a home school, sign in at the school, leave for another off site destination, struggle to find a parking place and new classroom room, and then hurry back to a home school in order to pick up a group of unregulated students was very difficult and did not set a good tone for the rest of their school day, and the combined experiences create a "nightmare" for the teachers.

Teacher E contrasted the experience this year with her experience at the school during the 2018-2019 school year when she was a student teacher. As mentioned earlier, the professional development sessions at the local school level during that year were after school, once the students had left. Staff at the school led the sessions, and teachers chose which session they wanted to attend. Teacher E indicated how impressed she was with the sense of community that year and what she witnessed at the after-school sessions. Specifically, she pointed out the administrator's practice of opening up the session with *Good Things* and the *Good as Gold* award at the beginning of the meeting. She said to see teachers come together with snacks and drinks and to hear teachers share out successes about their own students and to hear them recognize their own colleagues' successes and achievements was extremely powerful. As she noted, it did not take a long time to go through the process before breaking out into smaller sessions, but it was meaningful/authentic time for the teachers to spend together. Teacher E explained:

> I remember as a student teacher thinking how great it was. That's why I wanted a job here. That's one of the things that appealed to me. I felt like it was home. That's one of the things I said in my interview. This is home. I just wanted to stay here. And that wasn't because of the kids. That was because of the people.

Teacher D succinctly noted the model this year reinforces a real lack of community, which impacted the peer visit opportunities.

While both of the teachers did take an opportunity to visit their colleagues' classroom, the results of the visits were mixed. Teacher E said the time she spent visiting other classrooms during the spring 2019 was very beneficial. She was a student who teacher who was transitioning to a full-time teacher at her school, and she was "looking at everything" and it was "an overall view" when she went into a classroom. This year she found herself intentionally looking at the teacher's classroom management styles when she went into the classroom. She noted she thought she wanted to use groups on a regular basis, so she visited a math classroom to see how the teacher implemented group work. Teacher E described the classroom as "magic" and worked to implement the same model in her class; however, she had abandoned the idea by September because it was not working as well for her. She said it was also a learning experience for her, explaining the failure taught her "it's okay not to have everything perfect" and learning is messy and sloppy.

Teacher D only visited one classroom during the fall, and she indicated she did not gather much from the visit. She felt "it was not applicable to my class," so she was unable to carry anything back to her class. When asked why she chose that particular teacher, she indicated she "felt comfortable with [her]" because she was nice and friendly. Teacher D acknowledged she was excited about the opportunity to visit classes when the year started, but she didn't feel comfortable asking other teachers because she did not know them well enough. She explained "I don't know every teacher…I mean I know them, but I don't feel super comfortable saying 'hey, can I come in and observe your class,'" and this lack of community was a real barrier for her.

Both teachers recognized there were plenty of teachers willing to host them, but other aspects of the school prevented them from being able to take the step and approach their colleagues. They were excited about the opportunity to choose who they were going to potentially visit, but both had reservations about having to ask their administrator or another colleague to watch their class while they stepped in to visit another classroom. Teacher E expressed how uncomfortable she was asking because she "didn't want to overstep…personally, I don't want to ask someone to come in and take responsibility for 28 children" in her classroom. Teacher D confirmed she had the same feeling about asking for help. Teacher D said it would have been easier to ask for assistance if the school had required all teachers to do visit classrooms, but both teachers agreed the impact would have been negated because it would have felt like one more box to check.

Experienced educator focus group.

During the spring 2020 a focus group with four current teachers at Phillips Intermediate School took place to gather information about the new model of PD at the school during the previous year and contrast it with the current model. Each of the four teachers had received the Teacher of the Year award at the school the last four years, and two of the teachers went on to receive the Phillips School District's Teacher of the Year award. All of the teachers acknowledged how important it was for a school to have a sense of community in order for the entire staff to grow as professionals and acknowledged the district's model for the 2019-2020 school year had an adverse impact on the culture and community of the school.

Reflecting on the 2018-2019 school year, Teachers G, H, and I all acknowledged the value in having the after-school sessions on site and the value in the sessions themselves. Much of the conversation about the impact had to do with the sense of community it created and the

opportunities to discuss pedagogy with other teachers in the building who they may not see on a regular basis. Teacher H pointed out, "We got to see what other people had to offer. We got to step up as leaders at our school," and that it was less threatening to stand and speak to a group of peers as opposed to teachers from other buildings. Teacher I followed up by saying the most important part of the sessions was they were "relevant" because "it's our age group and it's our teachers. It was easier to access and ask follow up questions" when the sessions were done. She also said it was enlightening to see strengths in teachers she was not aware of at the time. All of the participants acknowledged the online courses they do now as part of the district professional development hinder the sense of community within the staff.

Each teacher discussed at length the impact of the school's community on their own sense of growth and efficacy. Teacher G acknowledged she has a strong personal drive, but the drive comes because she "want[s] to do well for the school" and "want[s] to do well" for her colleagues. Teacher I pointed out "sometimes you need a little reassurance. Sometimes you need support. It helps to have someone there who can back you up, who you can bounce ideas off during the day," and Teacher J acknowledged he longed for that opportunity when he was a new teacher. He noted when he started teaching, he was alone and did not have a team to dialogue with during the day. He said "I was the island. I was the only one who was not on a team. And I was jealous of it."

Results from Log Books

Five of the early-career educators took a total of six official, full visits during the applied research cycle where the teachers collected notes in their log books for further reflection. Two of the five early-career educators wrote down their guiding questions in the front of their books to have as they went into the classrooms. As mentioned earlier, though, the current culture of the

school precluded some of the teachers from feeling comfortable enough to visit the classrooms, even when there were plenty of teachers willing to host the teachers.

For both the spring 2019 and fall 2019 semesters, every teacher in the school was willing to "host" a teacher. Each of the early-career educators gave the researcher a list of teachers they would like to go visit, and the researcher coordinate the possible visits. After reaching out the preferred teachers the early-career educators identified, the researcher reached out the entire staff to see if there was anyone else who wanted to participate. There were only a select few who did not respond, so the researcher went to the experienced teachers personally and spoke to them. Most were comfortable hosting a teacher visit, but there were a few experienced teachers who were not comfortable at first. It took some reassuring to convince them the early-career educators were not coming in to evaluate but were there to observe and take something back to their own classrooms in order to build out their toolbelt. When the cycles began, there were ample experienced teachers willing to open their doors.

Statements and notes from the logbooks were categorized into five different subtopics: pedagogy, feedback, classroom management, culture, and self-reflection. Table 2 indicates the breakdown of the comments from the logbooks. As demonstrated, the majority of the notes teachers made in the logbooks centered around pedagogy and classroom management. Teacher C was the most reflective during the visits, noting one practice of gathering the formative feedback "was a great way to acknowledge student who got all [answers] correct" during the activity. She later wrote the teacher "does a great job of dealing with difficult students' behavior" while class is taking place. Teacher C was the only teacher who offered opinion on some of the practices and analyzed the effectiveness of certain strategies. All of the other

comments recorded in the log books were very objective in nature, simply recording what was observed with little evidence of reflective thought at that time.

Teacher E did note in her logbook some of the genuine conversations occurring with the students in the classroom at that time. While observing a classroom where group work was taking place, she captured the students' conversation during some math work. She noted "students saying things like… See what I mean?... Do you understand now?.. .helping out the student who need." These authentic conversations occurred in a different subject, but they resonated enough with the teacher that she noted them in her log book. In one of her other classroom visits, she recorded a note of a peer assisting another student when he was confused.

Table 2

Areas of focus for classroom visits

Area of focus	No. comments	Percentage of responses
Classroom management	23	48%
Culture and climate	2	4%
Formative feedback	4	8%
Pedagogy	15	31%
Self-reflection	4	8%

Note. All teacher notes grouped into one of five pre-determined categories based on guiding questions.

Results of Research Questions

Results for each of the primary research questions are included below. Each research question had a series of sub-questions connected to it. Embedded into the results of each research question are the answers to the various sub-questions.

Research Question 1

Ample evidence from the interviews and focused groups indicated the time spent with colleagues in focused, after school professional development sessions provided opportunities for early-career educators to engage with other experienced educators and learn in smaller, more intimate settings with their colleagues. They felt the semi-structured time after school provided a comfortable setting with direction since they were able to choose the sessions they found most beneficial. Multiple early-career educators indicated during their interviews the session on communication with parents was most helpful to them since the process of calling a parent to discuss a child's behavior was very uncomfortable for them. Observations during the year and in the subsequent year confirm the growth and confidence in the teachers. There was a discernable difference in the approach to parental conversations. It was clear the communication session was impactful and the results were tangible.

Based on observation and conversation with other members of the staff, the revamped after-school sessions were beneficial. Many of the staff members noted during the process how much they enjoyed the opportunity to learn from each other. Other staff members commented how much easier it was to take something practical back to the classroom when the presenter was available and accessible after the professional development session. The informal opportunities for conversation after the sessions proved to be a critical part for the teachers.

The focused visits into classrooms had more mixed results than the after school professional development sessions. Three of the teachers who took advantage of the opportunities to visit other classes indicated they did glean some good information from their visits, but the other two said they were not able to take much from their visits to the classes. Three of the early-career educators never made any visits at all to other teachers' classrooms;

however, one of the three was an inclusion teacher, so she was able to see other teachers work on a daily basis. The three who acknowledged they gleaned valuable information from their visits indicated they felt better about trying new practices in their classrooms. They did not use the word efficacy to describe how they felt after leaving a classroom, but they all indicated they had new ideas and felt emboldened to make a change in their classroom in order to assist students.

Of the teachers who did go on visits, they did not limit themselves to just visiting classrooms in their own content areas. However, they struggled to take anything from the visit that could assist them pedagogically because they felt there was too much of a difference due to differing content areas. They often gravitated to watching how host teachers managed a classroom. Consequently, their follow up conferences after any visits typically revolved around classroom management. The conversations that occurred after each visit typically centered around nuts and bolts of classroom management systems and how to implement or tweak a certain strategy they may have seen in while visiting the classroom. The conversations after visits were not as structured as the researcher intended for them to be, but for those who did engage in conversation, there was value. The follow up conversations sometimes occurred while driving home from work, sometimes at the lunch table, and sometimes on duty before or after school. Regardless of how or when the conversations took place, the teachers found value in them.

However, teachers who did not take much from their visits to other classes did not follow up with their host teachers to further discuss the visit. They indicated since they didn't take anything from the visit, they didn't see a need to follow up. Furthermore, one teacher indicated she intentionally scratched teachers off her list at the beginning because she felt like they did not

have anything to offer because she disagreed with how they taught her class. This mindset was prevalent at times in some of the teachers.

Three of the visiting teachers wrote the guiding questions in the front of their logbooks. These guiding questions were derived from the efficacy survey the staff took at one of the professional development sessions after school. Not all of the notes included in the log books centered around the guiding questions, but many of the notes throughout the logbooks did relate to the guiding questions.

Research Question 2

An evaluation of the components of the program revealed there were some elements that worked extremely well. The after school professional development sessions were successful by all accounts, and the feedback from the experienced and the early-career educators about the program was positive. Personal observations revealed teachers who were excited about the new model and even publicly shared some of their experiences on social media platforms. The teachers enjoyed the opportunities to learn from their colleagues and also share some of what they were doing in the classroom. The small, intimate groups of roughly 8-12 were typically diverse in content areas and provided semi-structured time for teachers to converse with each other.

Even though the sessions occurred more frequently than just once a month, it did not seem to bother teachers to stay after school since the PTO provided snacks for them, and they then had a choice of which session they were going to attend. Multiple teachers offered up unsolicited praise for the new model after various sessions. Often times extended conversations took place after the sessions between teachers and observations revealed genuine excitement

during the exchanging of ideas. Over the course of the year, there were times extended

conversations occurred into the weekly departmental PLC meetings.

The structure for peer visits was in place, and enough teachers did volunteer to open their

doors to early-career educators. With the exception of one teacher, all of the staff in the building

were comfortable with opening their doors for early-career educators to come and visit their

classrooms. It did require some convincing of two staff members to open their doors because

they were uncomfortable with the idea of anyone in their classrooms. The vast majority of the

teachers were comfortable and willing to open their doors for young teachers to come in and

observe their practices.

Conclusion

Overall the data from the teachers gave a clear picture of why certain parts of the overall

program worked better than others. An underlying theme for the entire applied research was the

role of the school culture. Significant changes in school leadership and district practices created

a significant shift in the culture of the school. Each teacher interviewed during the evaluative

process noted either directly or indirectly how the culture of the school impacted their own sense

of efficacy and how the shifting culture impacted their opportunities to grow as educators.

Evaluation of the data revealed teachers have very clear ideas of what does and does not work

for their own professional growth. However, simply implementing structures and organization

alone to change professional development opportunities is not enough. School leaders must

ensure the culture is ripe for any changes to occur.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter 5 provides analysis on each major component of the applied research including lessons learned during the process. Analyzed data highlights contributing factors to the end results of the applied research. The analysis also interprets how differences year over year for the school and district and impacted the applied research and the overall program. These changes had a significant impact on certain aspects of the overall design of the project. After the discussion and analysis of the after-school sessions and the peer visits, recommendations for improvement are included in the chapter. These recommendations include a timeline to follow for full implementation and simple strategies to utilize in order to begin to develop a culture that is conducive to the program. Finally, the section on long-term implications analyzes the potential collective impact of implementing a new model of professional development such as the one described in the research.

After School Sessions

The applied research led to insightful, practical information about the necessary elements needed in order to implement a system-wide change and approach to professional development in a school setting. Built around the body of research conducted by Eells (2011) and supported by John Hattie, the designed program intended to reorient the process of providing support for teachers in a school setting in order to increase their levels of self-efficacy. As important as the end results were regarding what teachers perceived as important for their own growth and sense of efficacy, the greatest finding during the evaluative process centered around the immediate

impact of school culture on any programmatic implementation. The study extended over two

school years, and the culture of the school went through a dramatic transformation due to

structural changes at the district level and leadership changes at the school level. Due to the

system-wide professional development changes at the district level, the school level after-school

sessions were eliminated. Even though teachers still had opportunities to choose their own

professional development sessions, they had very mixed feelings about the model due to some of

the byproduct of having delayed start days. Those feelings bled over into their approach to other

professional activities in the school.

An evaluation of the program shows certain aspects could be easily replicated and scaled

out at any school or grade level, and the findings from the evaluation will be instrumental in fine-

tuning the program moving forward, especially for administrators who desire a new way to

facilitate professional development. It is feasible to think any school could easily implement the

site-based, teacher led professional development in lieu of whole school, after school staff

meetings. It is simply a matter of administrators relinquishing some authority and control of

professional development in order to create a more wholistic school culture where learning is

reciprocated. In the same way administrators implore teachers to facilitate their students'

learning, administrators must begin to heed their own advice and view themselves as facilitators

of teachers' learning. They must create the climate for teachers to have semi-structured,

comfortable, collegial dialogue that leads to exploratory professional learning.

At Phillips Intermediate a significant number of stake holders had an active role in the

process from the planning to the implementation, and at a minimum, each participant had a

choice in what they wanted to learn more about during the after-school sessions. The researcher

was very clear from the outset that the process was a part of his dissertation, but it was also

naturally embedded into his job as an administrator. The researcher frequently reminded the staff the new model was a part of his dissertation and results from any surveys were shared with the staff to not only guide the work of the staff but to also engender their trust in the program. The belief was that enhanced trust in the motive for changing the model would create a more meaningful program.

During the course of the site-based professional development sessions at Phillips Intermediate School, new relationships between teachers grew, and the time together cultivated a feeling of trust among the staff. The small pieces of the time together began to make a significant difference in the teachers' attitudes and approaches to the professional development time. For each session after school, the parents provided simple, healthy snacks for the teachers to have. Every time the teachers entered the room, they immediately gravitated to the snack table and picked up a few items to nibble on while they prepared for their sessions. This small token of appreciation from the parents' organization went a long way in setting the tone for the afternoon, and any school could implement this simple practice.

Another easily replicated practice to engage the stakeholders and to help create the needed culture was the use of the *Good Things* and *Good as Gold* recognitions. The *Good as Gold* recognition went from teacher to teacher each month. The administration did not choose who received it, and it empowered the teachers to take ownership of their support for each other. It allowed them to recognize colleagues for specific deeds and behaviors, and the school did not limit its recognition throughout the year to a singular event like the Teacher of the Year award. The evolution of the *Good Things* throughout the year was a strong indicator that the time together was beginning to strengthen the culture and trust of the school. What started out as basic recognition of a colleague's birth of a child or a certain number of days until a vacation

soon grew into more substantive recognitions. As levels of trust between stakeholders increased in the after-school sessions, the recognitions began to highlight successes of individual students.

Each accomplishment brought forth by a teacher was also a small nugget of success that undoubtedly built their sense of efficacy and reinforced they were making a difference in the classroom. By the end of the year, the teachers were picking up a note card when they broke for their sessions, and they were to write a short note to one or more of their students applauding them for a certain accomplishment. The staff discussed how relationships, both between teachers and between teachers and students, would be engines for success.

The most difficult part of the process was convincing teachers they had something to offer each other and it was important to be at the meetings because they were no longer just informational sessions. As the staff saw their colleagues offer to lead sessions, they became more comfortable with the idea. In fact, for some of the teachers there was a real sense of pride when the administration asked them to lead a specific session one afternoon. There were others who were initially reluctant, but the administration felt they had something to offer, so they provided a gentle nudge of support.

The feedback from the interviews about the after-school sessions was very telling and provided an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Based on all of the interviews and observational data, one of the most important accomplishments of the after-school sessions was to build and support the culture of the school. One first year teacher who did her student teaching at the school noted how impactful the after-school sessions were for her. She decided she wanted to continue to work at the school because of what she felt during the time with other staff members. For her the decision had nothing to do with the students, school

district, or community. It all had to do with how she as a 22-year old saw the staff relate to one another during the time they were together.

Planning should begin in the spring prior to the implementation because it does take some time to understand what the staff would like to study and explore in the coming year. Looking back, this early engagement of the stakeholders went a long way in them trusting the process and knowing the motives for the new program were thought out and meant to assist them, not because it looked good on paper and would just reflect well on the district.

From design to implementation, schools looking to implement this model should begin planning and collecting data from teachers the spring prior to implementation. Simple surveys gauging levels of interest across a host of topics will provide the guidance for construction for after-school sessions the following year. Furthermore, if schools have a plan in place prior to interviewing new teaching applicants in the spring, they will be able to ask how an applicant could contribute to the school's overall professional development model. This would be an opportune time to establish expectations about collegial growth for new staff members.

After receiving results in the spring, school administration should begin to brainstorm and identify outside resources who could also assist in the process. Phillips didn't limit their sessions to just teachers. They also brought in central office and curriculum staff, and they reached out the University to assist as well. Lining up outside resources during the summer will allow the administration to focus on working with the teachers as the summer winds down and school begins.

Before jumping into the sessions, ground work must occur in order to begin to build the necessary levels of trust in order for the program to be implemented effectively. It is prudent to allocate at least three full faculty meetings to the explanation and trust building process. Without

explaining why or starting to lay the groundwork of trust, it will be difficult to lift the program off the ground.

The restructured after school sessions would be beneficial for any school district that wanted to work on empowering its staff to take ownership in order to improve the overall school culture and lead to an increased level of efficacy within the building. Long term, any sustained change will come from enhanced culture and capacity within a staff. The model of after-school professional development sessions not only addresses the issue of capacity and efficacy, but it also forces administrators to evaluate the overall culture of the school. This self-reflection is as important as any other step in the process. Requiring administrators to evaluate how they can improve the overall health and culture of a school will pay dividends in a variety of ways, including the potential reduction in teacher turnover, a critical issue in public education.

Peer Visits and Observations

The peer visits and observations were not as successful as the researcher hoped, but the information collected from the participants was very helpful in understanding why it did not take off as anticipated. The scaffolding of the visits and observations to come after the professional development model was good, but due to the significant culture shift in the school, it did not take hold like the after-school sessions. Looking at the sequence of events, the after-school sessions came to an end earlier than anticipated due to district demands. The process of hiring a new administrator consumed three of the spring sessions. In order to gather staff input, the district used the pre-scheduled days to speak to the staff on a few occasions about the process and to introduce the new administrator. These interruptions in the flow of the sessions had an adverse impact on the kick off of the peer visits and observations because the momentum the school had begun to create with the after-school sessions slowed down.

Additionally, the level of familiarity and comfort in the school played a significant role in the process. Teachers who expressed they were interested in visiting classes also acknowledged they were nervous about it. Even though almost every teacher in the school was open to having visitors, some of the young teachers were reluctant to initiate the conversation. This problem was only exacerbated the following fall when the after-school sessions no longer took place at the school. Teachers indicated they were uncomfortable asking to visit other classrooms when they didn't feel like they even knew the teachers. Further, despite knowing they could ask administrators to come and cover their classes for a period of time, they did not feel comfortable asking repeatedly for an administrator to come and watch their classes because they felt it disturbed the administrators' day to day routine. There was a general agreement though that if the administration had required them to visit classrooms, it would have felt much different. The element of choice was critical in their attitude towards the visits.

For any school wanting to implement a peer visit model, it is important to build relationships within the staff first. This is a misstep many schools make when working to establish something similar. They simply mandate a certain number of visits to another classroom, typically with requirements for critiquing what the visiting teacher saw. For a model like this to work, the initial expectations must be that the visiting teachers are simply there to collect information to assist in their own development of self-efficacy. Critiquing of peers leads to levels of distrust if a healthy culture is not in place.

Recommendations

It would behoove local and state level educational agencies to explore the role of traditional teacher evaluations and identify what does and does not work with the current system. Specifically, they must reflect and ask if the evaluations are used for professional growth or

accountability purposes. The literature from chapter two indicates variables such as the years of teaching experience, the age of students, the culture of the school, and the relationship between the administration and teachers all impact how teachers perceive evaluations. Furthermore, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation scrapped its recent $212 million-dollar initiative focusing on revamping teacher evaluations due to a lack of evidence the focus on evaluations increased student achievement (Will, 2018).

Narrowing the focus and primarily conducting regular evaluations for early career educators and teachers on improvement plans would allow administrators to give more individualized time to those who most need it and reorient evaluations toward professional growth purposes. By focusing more time on the early-career educators, it allows instructional leaders to give more substantive feedback, which in turn can lead to an increased sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, scaling back traditional observations would allow for administrators with the strongest background in pedagogy to utilize their strengths by conducting those evaluations and meeting with teachers. Therefore, other administrators can better use their time in other operational aspects of the school. The current model of dividing out a staff evenly among administrators leads to a compliance-based mindset for both teachers and administrators. The substantive pieces of the typical evaluation are often lacking.

Schools and higher education institutions should also be intentional about teaching current and future educators how to self-reflect. This process, a component of the certification through the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, is highly valuable, but it must be taught. Teachers do not always know how to connect what they are seeing in a classroom to their own pedagogy; therefore, it is difficult for them to see how pedagogical practice in one subject could transcend into other subjects. They are able to take classroom management

practices back to their classrooms, likely because they are subject neutral. However, they are not always able to see how they could utilize a math practice in an ELA classroom.

Schools should also reorient their professional development model to create more school-based choice sessions for professional development. This will create a more sustained, ongoing opportunity for meaningful growth and simultaneously create a more distributed leadership model that will assist in the school culture. Many schools and districts designate a few days for professional development throughout the year and then have a monthly after school session. Much of this time is administrator led and administrative in nature. By developing a model where teachers facilitate their own learning with other teachers, there will be greater opportunities for professional growth and enhanced levels of efficacy.

Finally, focus on understanding the culture and community of a school before embarking on any significant changes. Everyone plays a role in the success of a new program or implementation of a new idea. Simply having structure and systems in place is not enough. Understanding motivations and identifying hidden barriers is critical. Understanding people come before the process is vital. Understanding that relationships drive the success of any organization is the only way to improve long-term outcomes.

Conclusion

It would not be hard to implement pieces from either of the components of the developed program. Nor would it be difficult to simply establish an identical structure to the program described in the study. The challenge lies in establishing the needed culture in order for both models to thrive. During the applied research, both parts of the program showed promise, and the program evaluation revealed how subtle nuances played a large part in the overall process. While both the peer visits and the after-school sessions had the potential to increase the sense of

self-efficacy among the teachers, the after-school sessions did appear to be a more successful approach. As such this would be a good place to start for any district desiring to improve the overall collective efficacy of its staff since everyone in the school is involved.

It would benefit any leader desiring to make organizational change to truly assess the culture of the organization before embarking on grand initiatives. Consider how small changes can make significant differences in the outcomes of any initiatives and be open and transparent with others while embarking on this change. There is difference between implementing practices that lead to systematic, organizational change and implementing practices that look good on paper. The tricky part is the implementation often looks the same, so leaders must know how to evaluate their programs, build trust with those involved, and be nimble enough to adjust as they move forward. This is the only way true organizational change will be able to take hold and thrive.

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Appendix A

Teacher Focus Group Interview Protocol

Focus Group Protocol

Research Topic: Self-efficacy and professional growth in a school setting

Conceptual frameworks:

professional growth, professional dialogue, self-efficacy

Statement of Consent:

It's important we receive feedback about the programs we are working to implement. This feedback is helpful for us as a school to see whether there are better models to help our teachers improve and for me to learn how to effectively evaluate programs in schools. Are you ready to begin?

Ice Breaker Questions:

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. What's the one thing you wish you knew when you started teaching?

Professional Growth:

3. Since you started teaching, where do you feel you've grown the most as an educator?

4. What has been the most beneficial component of your professional growth?

5. What's your impression of how the district approaches professional growth for its teachers?

      a. How do you feel about the feedback you receive from administrators?

      b. What professional development activities do you recall from your time teaching?

      c. How would you describe professional development opportunities the district provides for its teachers?

6. How would you describe yourself in regards to being self-reflective practitioner?

Professional Dialogue:

8. What impact do conversations with your colleagues have on your professional growth?

a. What are some of the most helpful things you've learned from colleagues?

9. What is your perception of teacher collaboration in the building?

10. To what extent does your personal relationship with colleagues impact your professional dialogue with them?

11. What are your thoughts on self-paced modules where there is little dialogue?

Self-Efficacy:

12. What does self-efficacy in the workplace mean to you?

13. Are there barriers you see to increasing the collective efficacy of the building?

14. What types of activities have increased your confidence as an educator?

15. What are the most significant challenges for you as a professional?

16. What professional accomplishments have impacted your belief in yourself as an educator?

Appendix B

Marzano Evaluator Feedback Survey

For the following questions please keep in mind the feedback that you received throughout the current school year from your designated evaluator.

5. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. My evaluator's feedback…

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
… included specific improvement suggestions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… included specific suggestions to improve my content/ subject knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… included specific instructional strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… included specific classroom management strategies that I could use to improve my teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… included recommendations for finding resources or professional development to improve my teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… was provided as frequently as I needed it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… was provided in time for me to use it to inform my practice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The feedback I received was an accurate portrayal of my teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The classroom observations or walkthroughs that informed the feedback I received represented a typical day in my classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The evaluation system is accurate enough that different evaluators reviewing the same evidence would likely give the same ratings.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would receive the same feedback if my evaluator examined different evidence (e.g., if they observed additional lessons or reviewed additional evidence).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. In my opinion, my evaluator had sufficient …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
… knowledge of my content/subject to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… knowledge of how my students learn to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… knowledge of effective teaching practices to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… understanding of the curriculum being observed to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… understanding of the established teacher evaluation system to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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8. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I had access to the professional development (formal or informal) that I needed in order to implement suggestions provided in my feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I had access to an instructional leader (e.g., peer, coach/ mentor, administrator) who supported me in implementing suggestions provided in my feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I was able to observe expert teachers modeling skills that related to my feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I had time during the school day to plan for implementing new strategies based on my feedback (e.g., collaborative or individual planning time).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Because of the feedback I received from my evaluator …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
… I tried new instructional strategies in my classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… I tried new classroom management strategies in my classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… I sought professional development opportunities (formal or informal).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… I sought advice from an instructional leader (for example, peer, coach or mentor, administrator).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… I changed the way I plan instruction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. When deciding how to respond to your feedback, how important was each the following? Receiving …

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Critical
… specific improvement suggestions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… recommended next steps for finding professional development to improve your teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… feedback within an appropriate timeframe.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… feedback as frequently as you needed it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… feedback with specific suggestions to improve your content or subject knowledge.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… specific instructional strategies that you could use to improve your teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… specific classroom management strategies that you could use to improve your teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… feedback that was an accurate portrayal of my teaching.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… feedback from classroom observations or walkthroughs that represented a typical day in my classroom.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. When deciding how to respond to your feedback, how important was each the following? Having confidence that I would receive the same feedback …

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Critical
… from a different evaluator if they reviewed the same evidence.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… if my evaluator had examined different evidence (e.g., if they observed additional lessons or reviewed additional evidence).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. When deciding how to respond to your feedback, how important was each the following? Having confidence that my evaluator had sufficient …

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Critical
… knowledge of my content/subject to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… knowledge of how my students learn to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… knowledge of effective teaching practices to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… understanding of the curriculum being observed to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
… understanding of the established teacher evaluation system to effectively evaluate me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. When deciding how to respond to your feedback, how important was each the following?

	Unimportant	Slightly Important	Important	Very Important	Critical
Having access to the professional development (formal or informal) that I needed in order to implement suggestions provided in my feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Having access to an instructional leader (e.g., peer, coach/ mentor, administrator) who supported me in implementing suggestions provided in my feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Being able to observe expert teachers modeling skills that related to my feedback.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Having time during the school day to plan for implementing new strategies based on my feedback (e.g., collaborative or individual planning time).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Appendix C

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale

Megan Tschannen-Moran

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale[1] (long form)

Teacher Beliefs	How much can you do?								
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students ?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
19. How well can you keep a few problem students form ruining an entire lesson?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

Appendix D

Full Results of Efficacy Survey

Complete Staff Efficacy Survey Results

Table 3

Complete results from staff efficacy survey

Statement	*M (SD)*	Variance
How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	3.83 (.88)	.78
How much can you do to help your students think critically?	4.07 (.84)	.70
How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	3.83 (.86)	.74
How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	3.59 (1.01)	1.02
How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	4.15 (.72)	.52
How much can you do to help your students value learning?	3.9 (.88)	.77
How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	4.1 (.79)	.62
How much can you do to foster student creativity?	3.93 (.84)	.7
How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	4.05 (.79)	.63
How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	3.78 (.84)	.71
How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	3.71 (.89)	.8
How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	3.95 (.89)	.8
How comfortable are you using a variety of assessment strategies?	4.07 (.84)	.7
How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	3.56 (.94)	.88

Note. Teachers answered each question using a Likert scale response from 1-5, with 1 being "none at all" and 5 being "a great deal." *n*=41

VITA

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Ed.S. in Education Leadership, 2008 (Magna Cum Laude)

University of Mississippi- Oxford, MS
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District Assessment Coordinator/Assistant Career Technical Education Director, 8/2010 to present
Oxford School District - Oxford, MS

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Teacher, 08/2007 to 07/2009
Clinton Public Schools - Clinton, MS

Teacher/Asst. Dean of Students, 07/2004 to 07/2007
St. Andrew's Middle School - Ridgeland, MS

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